# THE MAGAZINE OF Fantasy AND Science Fiction

MAY 40¢

The Man Who Could Not Stop
a novelet by
A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

J. T. McINTOSH
ROBERT GRAVES
CHAD OLIVER
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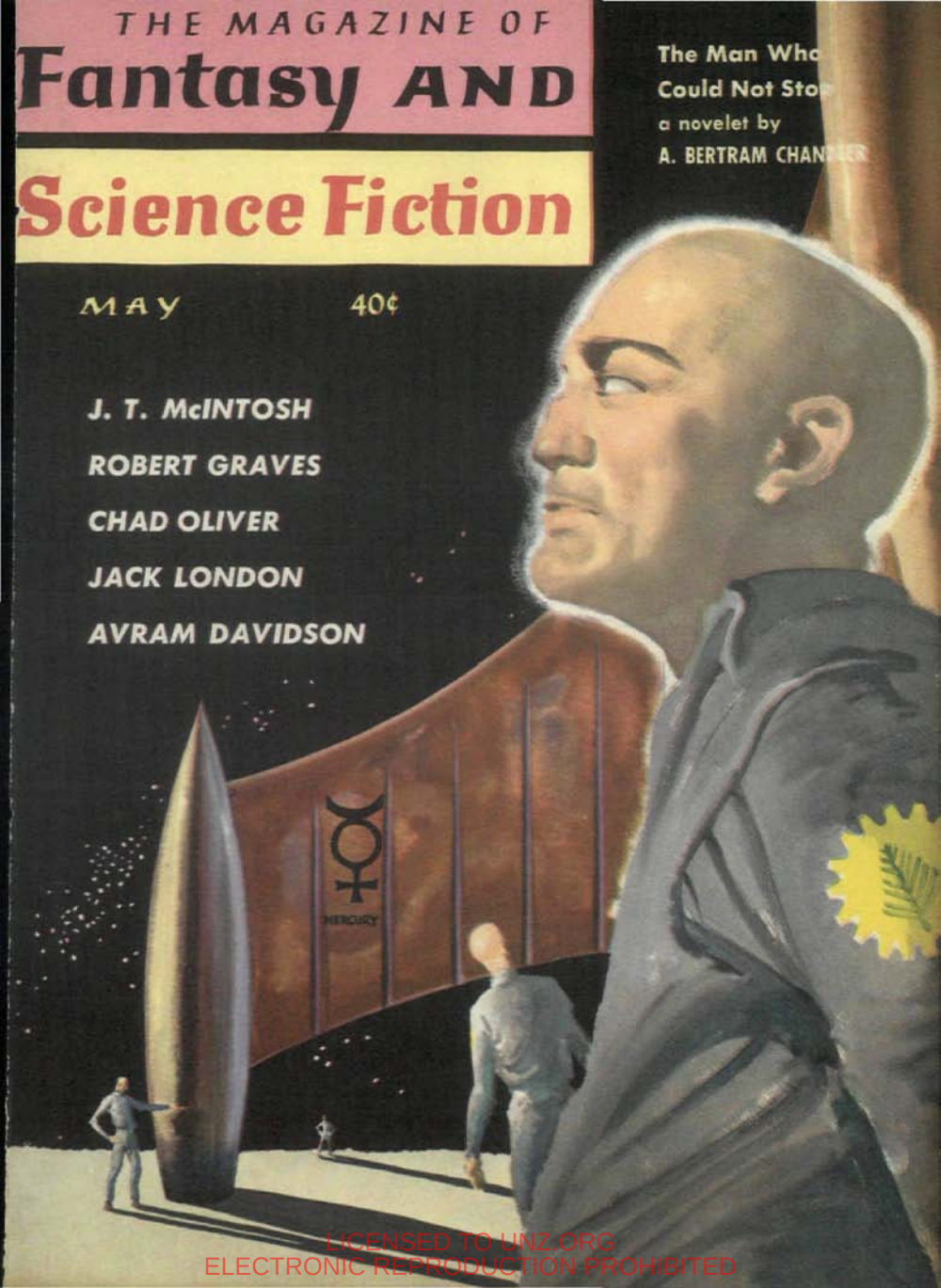


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THE MAGAZINE OF

# Fantasy and Science Fiction

VOLUME 16, No. 5 MAY

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## *This month . . .*

. . . we solicit reader opinion, on three separate counts:

1. This issue contains three short novelets, and we would very much like to know if such a balance pleases you. For some reason we can make no useful attempt to explain, the creative talents in the field seem to be turning more and more to longer stories, and we have quite a few in stock; at the same time, we don't want to give them to you in larger bunches than you would like to receive them. What is your pleasure?

2. The story on page 51—*The Shout,* by Robert Graves—we first published a bit over seven years ago, and we bring it to you again for two reasons: we have had several recent requests that this particular story be repeated, and we have also received a number of letters urging that we repeat other stories from the past. We do not propose to make a regular department out of such repeats—indeed, we may not bring back any more stories at all—unless we hear from a significant number of you that you would like us to.

3. Isaac Asimov's Science column has stirred much favorable comment—but few correspondents have offered suggestions for subjects Dr. Asimov might cover in future columns. Would you like to see more articles such as this month's, on orbits of planets and satellites, and what determines them . . . or do you prefer chemical subjects such as last month's *Life's Bottleneck?* Or what? Whatever your particular interests, we would be pleased to hear about them.

## *Coming next month . . .*

Philip Jose Farmer has been absent from these pages too long, a lack which is repaired next month by his novelet *The Alley Man*—a strong, often brutal, and very different sort of story that is difficult to describe, but must be read. James Blish, also too long absent, returns too, with a short novelet about a crash landing on an unknown planet in the middle of the Galaxy, and the extraordinary aftermath. Also, Robert Arthur dishes up a delightful tale of a goose, a modern man, and an assault by the Gauls on Rome; Charles G. Finney will be present with *The Iowan's Curse;* Isaac Asimov tells of *The Planet of the Double Sun;* and numerous other pleasant diversions will be included. Join us?

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*At the Second Chance building you could—if you were rich enough—buy your way into a younger you in another, similar universe. There you could be healthy again, in love again, hopeful again. Of course, you could also suffer the special pain of failing again . . .*

# TENTH TIME ROUND

***by J. T. McIntosh***

HAVING SAID GOODBY TO THE LAST of his friends, Gene Player took a cab to the Second Chance building; as far as his particular friends went, he was now dead. They'd never see him again—not in this universe.

He would see them again, of course. . . .

The taxi-driver stared at his tip. "Maybe I should keep my big mouth shut," he said, "but I couldn't sleep nights. This is five thousand dollars, Bud."

For answer Gene pointed at the Second Chance building.

"Oh," said the cabbie. "I get it. All the same, ain't you got anybody to leave it to?"

"No," said Gene.

He'd given money to such of his friends as he thought needed it and would be better off with it. He'd left some to charity. The rest was to go to Belinda—even if she was Mrs. Harry Scott.

He paid no attention to the big display ads in the lobbies of the vast Second Chance building. He'd seen them before, in nine similar but slightly different universes. He paid still less to the hesitant, worried, uncertain people who were looking at the displays, biting their nails, taking a step back and two forward, or vice versa.

It was a big decision, the first time. If you were at all successful in life at forty, fifty, sixty, the glorious thought of being young again, strong, healthy and probably in love, was considerably tempered by the consideration that you'd be pushed around again, that you'd have to get up at seven and work hard all day for less than a tenth of what you made now, that you'd have to go through this or that operation again, that you'd have to see your father and mother die again . . .

Besides, there was no guarantee that you'd be successful the second time. Weakened by success,

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you might not work as hard. Or you might make a mistake you'd avoided before.

You could do better with your life, or you could do worse.

It was the failures in life who wanted a second chance, and they were about eighty-five per cent likely to achieve the same failure. Not many of them got the opportunity—failures didn't have the money for a flashback.

Merely because he happened to see a visiphone booth vacant and open, Gene suddenly thought of calling Belinda. It was a purely spontaneous idea—he hadn't said goodby to her and hadn't intended to.

However, before he had consciously made up his mind he was in the booth and dialling Belinda's number.

Her face faded in on the screen and assumed surprise. "Why, Gene," she said. "You promised—"

"I'm at the Second Chance building," he said. "I'm going back to 1975."

Her eyes softened. She didn't say anything.

In her thirties, Belinda Scott was lovelier than she had been in her twenties, because she was that type of woman. She had always been magnificent, but her magnificence sat more gracefully on her maturity than on her youth.

"You won't be seeing me again," Gene said. "But I'll be seeing you."

There was affection in her eyes, but not love. Never love.

"Gene," she said quietly, "can't you just accept the fact that for me it must always be Harry?"

"Suppose Harry were dead? Suppose I killed him?"

She shook her head, smiling. "You wouldn't do that, Gene."

"No," he said heavily. "I wouldn't do that."

"Good luck, Gene," she said, and her warm smile faded as he cut the connection.

He left the booth and made his way upstairs. He knew exactly where to go. Pethick's secretary was a different one this time. He wondered what had happened to the honey-blonde, wondered what she was doing instead of being Pethick's secretary.

Pethick was always the same. He didn't know Gene; that didn't matter.

Pethick was a little round duck of a man, an egg over a balloon over two sad little overworked legs. He came forward with his hand outstretched.

"Mr. Player?" he said. "It's a pleasure to meet you. I've read all your books."

The first time Gene had been flattered, had talked about his novels and found out that Pethick really had read them all. Since

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that time, he had not bothered.

"Frankly, Mr. Player," Pethick said, "though I'm glad as a director of Second Chance Incorporated that you're considering flashback, I'm sorry as a reader."

"Thank you," said Gene automatically. Even sincere things sounded pretty thin the ninth time around. "But I'm not considering it. I've already considered. I'm going."

"There are certain things I have to tell you—"

"I know them. I've done it before."

"Oh." Pethick was interested. "Have you met me in other universes?"

"Always."

"Always? How often—"

"Nine times. This is the tenth."

Pethick looked startled. "And you come back here every time? You must have a very good reason—"

"I have."

"Mr. Player, if you're trying to change something and have failed eight or nine times, there must be a strong possibility that you're up against a buttressed situation, what we call an immutable. In that case—"

"I know about that. It's my worry."

"Of course, but—"

"I want to go back to June 3, 1975."

"That's the very first day we can reach," said Pethick, struck by the coincidence. "And it's only this week we've been allowed to extend flashback as far as that."

"I know. That's why I'm here."

"You've waited till 1986 to be able to go back to 1975?"

"Yes."

Pethick was quite excited over all this. Gene Player was his most interesting client for a long time.

"Does it always work exactly as planned?" he asked. "Do you always land exactly—"

"Eleven-twenty, Tuesday, June 3, 1975. It's always raining and I always get soaked. I wasn't wearing a raincoat that day."

"Perhaps we could make it a little later in the day, say—"

"Please, Mr. Pethick. I don't want to be rude, but I've already been through something very like this conversation nine times already."

"Of course, Mr. Player."

"Then could we cut the cackle and get to business?"

Pethick was hurt, as usual.

Few things changed as little from universe to universe as Pethick did. From the moment of flashback you were doing, thinking, saying different things and creating a new world. That didn't matter to the one you'd just left; it went on happily without you. The one you'd entered, or re-entered,

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was another matter. Within days you could have been the cause of some remarkable changes.

There were, however, a few things, some big, some small, some important, some unimportant, which didn't change. Which couldn't be changed.

The immutables.

They didn't bother with a medical; this body was going to be as good as dead within seconds anyway.

It wasn't time-travel, exactly. Nothing travelled except consciousness and memory. Which was why nobody could ever take any money.

Your consciousness and memory were put back into the you of another universe, at any time between June 3, 1975, when the whole business started, and the current date. In Gene's case that was February 9, 1986.

Naturally there wouldn't be any point in this unless you knew about it. Gene would know exactly what he knew as of February 9, 1986, plus what he had known on June 3, 1975. It would be quite a jolt for the 1975 Gene Player, but Gene knew he could take it.

Gene paid no attention to the technical side; this was an old story.

Pethick had been flabbergasted when he produced a check for $191,732, the exact fee with all dues and extras and tax. That never changed either.

They warned him that it was just about to happen, and he nodded. He knew he was exasperating everybody by being so casual about it all . . .

He was in a city street, running for shelter in a sudden shower.

The brain and body belonged to a Gene Player who was twenty-six, not thirty-seven, and though he tried to take over with his 1986 mind, the shock was so great that he stumbled and fell headlong.

By the time he'd picked himself up, he was already soaked, and shelter no longer mattered so much. People huddling in doorways stared at him curiously.

It wouldn't occur to any of them what had happened, because though some of them must have heard about flashback, due to operate from that day, hardly anybody believed it yet.

The rain stopped abruptly, very much to Gene's surprise. His arrival couldn't possibly have any immediate effect on the weather. He glanced at his watch and saw it was eleven-forty-one. Twenty-one minutes later than usual.

If Pethick had to fiddle with his time of arrival, he might have made it five minutes later, after the rain was off.

The sun blazed and the streets steamed. The hordes emerged from the doorways and clacked along the sidewalks.

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The 1975 Gene was marvelling incredulously, but as usual it was the 1986 Gene who was really in control. Within an hour or two they'd have merged completely.

People were always the same, but fashion was always a momentary surprise. It seemed impossible that the Twentieth Century could include a phase of super-modesty, yet here it was, right at its peak. In 1975, city councils were stopping theatres from showing movies more than two years old, be cause of the shocking depravity of feminine dress before 1973. Girls of twenty were hotly denying that at seventeen they had worn shorts and frequently had left their shoulders bare.

It was a brief, curious phase and would last, Gene remembered, just six more months before fashion started to swing towards the salaciousness of the early eighties and the comparatively innocent nudity of the middle eighties, if the swing went as far as it had done in run six.

Drab colors went with the repressive clothes, naturally—dark blues and browns, grays, blacks, bottle-greens. Nobody, but nobody, wore red.

Gene shook off his surprise. He knew all about 1975 and its superficial drabness. It was a shock merely as it is a shock to see an old photograph.

He knew what to do.

First he went to the bank and cleared the account. With what he had had in his pockets, he now had three hundred forty-seven dollars and seventy-one cents. Not much, but enough. There was a little more to come. He was about to be fired.

He didn't go to see Mr. Kynock of Wheatie Puffets. And when he entered the Motet Advertising offices at twelve-ten, Mr. Carswell was waiting, fuming.

"Player, Kynoch just called," said Carswell. "It seems you didn't go to see him."

"No," said Gene laconically.

"Why not?"

"I had more important things to do."

Carswell boiled over. "Player," he said furiously, "you're fired."

"Thank you," said George gratefully. That was even shorter than usual.

When he had collected his things—and his pay-check—Carswell was waiting in the outer office. He had cooled down considerably. "Perhaps I was a little hasty, Player," he said. "I've no doubt you have an explanation. We don't really want to lose you. You have a certain touch with advertising copy—"

"Thank you," said Gene again, automatically, sidestepped him and walked out.

If you wanted them, they didn't want you. And vice versa. Gene was philosophizing about this as he hit the sidewalk again,

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and felt the blast of the midday heat.

The first time, and to a lesser extent the second time, he had wanted to keep his job. He had pleaded with Carswell, who had been adamant. Subsequently Gene had wanted nothing more than to be fired—and Carswell had pleaded with him.

Perhaps there was a pointer there to the way he should act with Belinda. He thought about that over lunch.

No point in trying to see her now. She'd already met Harry Scott—he could never get to her before that vitally important point in her life, and his.

Harry Scott was a friend of Gene's, and first time round Gene had met Belinda only after they were married. Subsequently Gene had arranged not strictly chance meetings in all sorts of circumstances and places. Going to Canada, where Belinda was now, was a complete flop. Belinda's aunt was with her, the aunt always took an instant dislike to Gene, and the results were disastrous.

No, Gene had found a strange, improbable, dangerous and apparently wildly coincidental way of meeting Belinda the day she returned from Canada in a few weeks' time, and since it had worked effectively several times already there seemed no reason why it shouldn't work again. There was never anything wrong *then*. It was later that Belinda was so much in love with Harry that there was no shifting her.

This time he'd have to make better use of that first meeting. If he failed then, there was never any chance later.

Meantime, he had work to do. He needed money, like everybody else. It was so hot, however, that he was reluctant to go to his tiny, stuffy room and get busy. He lingered in the park after lunch, as he had never done before—and right away the sequence of events began to change.

His apartment, if you could call it that, overlooked the park. He could be hard at work in five minutes. He knew he ought to get started, but for a few moments he sat in the sun, gathering his strength for the long, concentrated effort he would have to make.

And he saw the blonde.

She should be in a sweater and shorts instead of that hideous ankle-length gray skirt and black bodice. Funny her being alone. Even in 1975 a girl like that ought to pick up men like flies.

Having his whole course so completely preordained, knowing exactly what was going to happen, he was somehow freer, more reckless, less self-conscious than he would otherwise have been. He stopped beside her.

"You didn't drop your handkerchief," he said.

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She pretended he didn't exist. Now that he was close to her, he saw she was very young, probably still in her teens. She was also even more pretty than he had thought.

"Why didn't you drop your handkerchief?" he pursued.

"I couldn't," she said rather nervously. "I haven't got one."

"You mean if you had one, you'd certainly have dropped it?"

"I don't mean anything of the kind!" she retorted hotly. "Now if you'll please—"

"Thank you," he said. "I will." He sat down beside her.

Though flustered, she couldn't help very nearly smiling. Promising, he decided. Funny how the fact that there was only one woman in the world for you made things go so much more smoothly with other women. Perhaps it was like the Motet Advertising job. You could get anything at all, provided you didn't want it.

"You would be pretty," he told her.

That got her. She turned a cute little nose to him. "If what?"

"If you wore something feminine."

She turned the cute little nose in the air.

"My name is Gene Player and I'm a writer," he said.

No answer.

He didn't really care, and he had work to do anyway. He got up.

"I'm Doreen Barrett," she said quickly.

He sat down again.

This didn't count, of course. Belinda was the only woman who mattered. He'd been in love with her for ninety-nine years—11 x 9.

At the same time he was beginning to be fatalistic. If the same thing happened with Belinda as always did happen with Belinda, there was no harm in having somebody like Doreen Barrett as a second string.

When in the early evening he got to work, he tore into it to make up for lost time.

He rolled a sheet of paper into the ancient machine, banged out "*One Face for Heaven,* a novel by Gene Player," and proceeded to rush through pages at an average rate of one every ten minutes. When he stopped at 3 a.m. he had finished sixty pages, about 15,000 words.

If anything, *One Face for Heaven* was better every time he wrote it. The dross dropped out; only the really good sections were written word for word. Every time it was stronger, surer. The curious thing was that it always sold almost exactly the same number of copies, despite the minor changes each time which in total should have been considerable.

Originally he had written *One Face for Heaven* some years after this, after many months of indifferent success. The first time he

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had committed it to paper in 1975 he had done so with misgivings, knowing that a book which was a tremendous success could easily be a flop ten years before or ten years after. Particularly a book like *One Face for Heaven,* the sexy passages of which might kill the novel stone dead in the censorious mid-seventies.

However, he needn't have worried. In the mid-seventies, as in the Victorian age, public morality was balanced by private immorality. Everybody would censure *One Face for Heaven,* but everybody would read it.

The next day he wrote another 15,000 words before staggering out to see Doreen in the park again. She wasn't there, despite her promise. The hell with her. He went back and wrote another 10,000.

Early next morning, haggard and unshaved, he dug in again. At lunchtime he suddenly noticed how hot and tired and limp he was. He was soaked in sweat.

Without shaving, washing or changing his clothes, he went out in the park again, merely for fresh air.

And Doreen was there waiting for him, pouring out apologies for not being there the day before after promising she would be . . .

She had been so eager to explain that she hadn't looked at him properly, but she soon noticed the state he was in. "Why . . . what's the matter?" she said. "You look as if you'd been through hell."

"I have," said Gene. "Because you weren't here yesterday."

She was very young. "Do you really care as much as that, Gene? I didn't know . . ." But she was also intelligent. "You're ribbing me," she said indignantly. "It was nothing to do with me."

He grinned at her. She was sweet.

"What have you really been doing?" she asked.

"Writing a book. I've done 40,000 words since I saw you."

"Is it worth working so hard on it?"

"Oh yes. It's a best-seller."

"How do you know?"

"Call it Faith."

She was puzzled, but impressed. She was no more than eighteen, and Gene was beginning to wish he had never spoken to her. She had obviously stayed fresh and frank and innocent because she had never been in love and had had no trouble in dealing with men whom she didn't love. But already she was falling in love with Gene, and that was a new complication.

He had never lost Belinda because some other girl was in love with him, but there had to be a first time for everything.

Of course, if he fared with Belinda as he always had, Doreen needn't break her heart. Once he

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had duly lost Belinda he'd be prepared to turn without much enthusiasm to some other girl, who might as well be Doreen.

But this time he wasn't going to lose Belinda, and that was why this wasn't fair to Doreen.

Belinda's love for Harry Scott couldn't be an immutable. Gene refused even to consider the possibility.

Immutables . . . nobody knew quite what they were or what caused them. They were things which just had to happen, however they happened.

There was the atomic explosion in Pittsburg in 1981. After it had happened, a technician was sent back a few days to fix it. It had happened in one universe and couldn't be avoided there. But in all other universes it could.

It was not surprising that the technician who volunteered to go was a man whose wife and family had been killed in the explosion.

He saved his wife and family, but the explosion still happened. It happened in all the universes Gene knew, and he was something of an expert on universes. Though the effects of the disaster could be limited, and were, it nevertheless happened—always.

There was a lesser immutable that Gene happened to know about.

First time round he'd been at a heavyweight title fight in which Frank Bolsey knocked out Fats Homeier in the seventh. Second time round he didn't bother to go, since he knew what would happen.

On that occasion Bolsey beat Homeier on points over fifteen rounds.

Gene didn't think much about this at the time, but was sufficiently interested to have a ringside seat the third time round. That time Homeier battered Bolsey all round the ring until the ninth round, when suddenly Bolsey won on a knock-out—his first real punch.

Gene had found since then that this fight, which was quite obviously not fixed, must be another of these strange immutables. Anything could happen in it. Homeier could be an obvious winner nine tenths of the way or Bolsey could ride easily through it—but whatever happened, Bolsey had to win.

Knowing all this, Gene stubbornly refused to believe that there was anything immutable about Belinda's love for Harry Scott.

This time the immutable was going to be mutated.

And that was why he felt guilty about Doreen.

By the next time he saw Doreen he had finished well over a hundred thousand words.

She worked in an office which closed for two hours at lunchtime,

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and as she merely pecked for fifteen minutes or so, this left her a lot of time to spend in the park.

By now there wasn't the slightest doubt of it—she was in love with him. Being a well-brought-up girl, she wouldn't invite him to invite her to do something more than just see her in the park for an hour or so each day, but she did all that a well-brought-up girl could do to make herself as attractive as possible to him. In 1975, when clothes weren't allowed to play their part, this wasn't much. She might have a figure like Aphrodite, or like Aphrodite's grandmother, for all that Gene knew.

In any case, he was a dedicated man. Apart from washing and shaving before going out to meet Doreen, eating and sleeping when he remembered, he was spending twenty-four hours a day at his typewriter. He had to—publishers take their time about handing over money for a novel, and also Gene wanted the book off his hands before Belinda got back from Canada.

He preferred doing it that way. Normally a novelist has to take time off to revise and think, or he may find himself having to throw away big chunks of what he has written. But Gene knew his story, characters, everything. He also knew that *One Face for Heaven* was better than ever this time, which helped.

Ignoring Doreen's wistful hints, he went back to work. When it was quite late, he was so near completing the book that he decided to go straight on, and around 7 A.M. he banged THE END, and thankfully flopped in bed.

When he opened his gummy eyes Doreen was bending over him. He saw with acute surprise that even with dresses the way they were, a pretty girl of eighteen bending over far enough could be quite sensational.

He didn't sit up. "How did you get up here?" he said indistinctly. "Did you have to shoot Mrs. Schukelmacher?"

"Your landlady? I saw her go out. Gene, this place is filthy. You've been living like a pig."

"I know," he sighed. He sat up, wincing; Doreen wasn't bending over him any more. His throat was raw from too much smoking, his head ached, and he had a whale of a hangover, which was unfair as he had drunk nothing alcoholic since 1986.

Doreen threw open the window to let out the blue-gray fog in the room. The temperature must have been close to a hundred, the air was used up, and it was no wonder Gene had a tongue four sizes too big and a skull six sizes too small.

"I came when I didn't see you in the park," Doreen said. "I was afraid you . . ."

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She turned away quickly and started picking things up.

Gene got to his feet, swaying. He remembered something. "This is Saturday," he said.

"Yes."

"You don't work at all today."

"No."

"You usually go home for the weekends."

She didn't reply. She kept her face turned away from him.

It was too late to retreat. She had said she'd see him in the park as usual, and he saw now that she had remained in town specially to do so. He hadn't realized that the day before, being too soaked in *One Face for Heaven* to notice anything.

He knew that if he said he had work to do, she'd go away meekly, disappointed and hurt but bravely concealing it. Trying hard to think rationally, he decided it would be a lot better if she did.

Yet if he sent her away he'd feel a heel. If he sent her away he'd *be* a heel. Also a fool.

"Doreen," he said, "let's leave this place exactly as it is, go out in the country, swim, laze in the sun, maybe dance in the evening." The thought of swimming made him shudder, but he knew it would make a new man of him. That would be all to the good, too, for the one he was was shot.

Doreen's eyes were shining. "Wonderful, Gene, but—what about your book?"

He picked up the pile of sheets and started to knock them into a neat oblong. "Finished," he said thankfully. "I ought to check it over, cut out anachronisms, but what the hell. They'll like it as it is, and all that can be done afterwards."

He started clumsily wrapping the fat pile of quarto paper in brown paper.

"Let me do that," said Doreen quickly.

"With pleasure."

While she did so he had a quick shower and put on his lightest clothes. He didn't eat anything, merely washed out his mouth. When he was good and hungry he'd eat.

They left the gloomy roominghouse and he mailed the typescript. Then, recklessly, he hired an old car and drove Doreen to the apartment she shared with another girl.

Before she went in, she hesitated. "Were you serious about swimming, Gene?" she asked.

"Sure, why?"

"Oh, nothing." But still she hesitated.

"What's the matter? Can't you swim?"

"Yes, but . . . my costume isn't . . . it's old, and . . ."

He got it. "I promise not to be shocked," he said kindly.

She wasn't sure how to take

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that, and went slowly up the steps while he waited in the car.

They drove far enough for Gene to become ravenous and then stopped at a drive-in for lunch. They picked up a packed lunch while they were there, and drove on until they found an uncommercialized lake.

It was so uncommercialized that in getting to it the car got stuck and had to be left blocking the alleged road. Nobody was at the lake when they walked the rest of the way, and nobody could get there later with the car blocking the road.

When Doreen emerged reluctantly from the bushes in a white two-piece swimsuit which might have fitted her at fifteen but was pleasingly inadequate now, Gene's mind reeled. For all of a couple of seconds he forgot Belinda.

The fact that he hadn't previously seen even her arms or ankles, let alone the gorgeous rest of her, made the impact nearly fatal. However, he rallied.

"Honey," he said weakly, "get into the water before I lose control of myself."

She gulped and said recklessly: "I don't think I'd run screaming if you did, Gene."

Gene Player fought a short but violent battle with himself. He was careful not to look at Doreen as he did so, because if he had, there would have been no battle.

She was in love for the first time, and like everybody in love for the first time, she was ready to throw everything out of the window. If it weren't for Belinda . . .

He won his battle. "Let's swim," he said.

Afterwards, when they lay in the sun, he told Doreen about his flashback. He didn't think it necessary to tell her he'd done it nine times.

She wasn't incredulous. She'd heard about it.

"It really works?" she said. "You've come back from the year 1986?"

"Not exactly. I've never really left 1975. It's just that I know what happened in the next eleven years in another universe—not this one."

Her eyes searched his, puzzled. She was wondering what this had to do with her, what effect it had on her relations with Gene.

He told her about the novel, that he knew it would be an enormous success.

"Why don't you just bet on horses?" she asked. "Or on the market? Or—"

"There's going to be a big legal case about that very soon," he said. "A big betting firm is going to sue Second Chance Incorporated and half a dozen people who have won big bets, claiming that flashback makes their business impossible. There's no way of telling, you see, whether a man has made a

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flashback or not, short of hypnosis and truth drugs. The ruling is going to be that whenever anybody makes a lot of money fast by betting or investments or insurance or any other form of legal gambling, he may be asked to submit to hypnosis or truth-drug questioning. If he's made a flashback, his gains are forfeit."

Doreen was interested. "Suppose instead of making the investment himself, he sells the information?"

"You've got a brain too," said Gene admiringly. "Yes, that's going to be tried too. And it won't work either, because whoever *is* questioned will reveal where he got the information, if any, and it'll be tracked down that way. No, flashback doesn't mean easy money. My book's different. I really did write it."

"Suppose somebody else stole your book? I mean, made a flashback, wrote it down and sold it as his own?"

"He'd have to carry it all in his head—and that's not easy for anybody but the author."

Doreen went on talking animatedly about the ramifications of flashback, and Gene realized with mixed feelings that he'd been all too successful in diverting her. An hour before she'd have given herself to him. Now she was talking as if he were an interesting item in *Readers Digest*.

As far as he was concerned she hadn't changed. She was still in her white two-piece, and he was fully aware of her breathtaking physical presence.

He forced his attention back abruptly to his reason for telling her about the flashback.

"Doreen," he said, "I must have had a reason. You know that."

At once that puzzled, doubtful look returned to her eyes.

"I can't tell you about it," he said. "Not yet. Doreen, can you wait a few days—a week or two?"

"And then?" she breathed.

"I don't know." He felt a heel again. What he was saying was: *Will you hang around so that I can condescend to notice you if another girl turns me down?*

"I'm not to see you during that time?"

"Well . . . suppose we keep on just meeting in the park?"

She was radiant again. Anything so long as he did not cut her out of his life.

He jumped up. It was cooler now, wearing on towards evening. "Let's go somewhere and dance."

"Just one thing, Gene," she said. "Last time—did you and I meet?"

"No," he said.

She whispered something which he didn't hear, and she wouldn't repeat it when he asked her to.

This time the publishers offered an advance of $5,000, which was a mild surprise. Previously it had been only $3,500.

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As before, there was a lot dickering about serialization and it came to nothing. Also two film companies heard about *One Face for Heaven,* demanded copies, and made ridiculously small offers which were turned down.

Five thousand was quite enough for Gene's immediate needs. He knew the book would really make money in about six months' time.

One Sunday in July he met Doreen as usual in the park. He had tried to get her to go home that weekend, but she had said no, she had things to do in town anyway. Gene wondered if it was the last time he'd be seeing her.

Afterwards, timing his movements carefully, he drove his recently acquired 1969 Buick—not the same one he had had before, but that shouldn't matter—to a certain boulevard and turned in to park.

He cursed.

A cab was dropping a fare precisely where Gene wanted to put the Buick. However, the passenger, an elderly woman, was paying off the driver, and in a few seconds he would move off.

Unfortunately he didn't. The cabbie, a slow, lean-jawed man with iron-gray hair, sat back, took an apple from his pocket and proceeded to bite into it reflectively.

Gene was getting desperate. The taxi would undoubtedly move within a few minutes, but a glance at Gene's watch showed him there weren't many minutes to spare. If the driver took his time over eating that apple, it would be too late.

He had to be shifted.

Gene thought wildly of ramming him. That wouldn't do; there would be an argument.

He thought of jumping in the cab and getting the driver to start out somewhere. Then Gene could suddenly remember something and jump out. Or he could get the driver to go round the block.

But there wasn't time.

Gene leaped out of the Buick and ran to the cab.

"Will you deliver a message?" he said breathlessly. "It's urgent."

The gray-haired driver removed the apple reluctantly from his mouth and was about to say something. But Gene's wallet was under his nose, open.

"Sure," he said. "Where and what?"

"Miss Doreen Barrett," Gene said. While he gave the address he tried to think up a message—any message. Finally he said weakly: "Tell her I'll call at eight tonight. Hurry, will you?"

The cabbie made no secret of the fact that he thought there was something decidedly nuts about all this, but Gene's ten-dollar bill was real. He took it, put the car in gear, and moved off.

Almost as soon as the wheels of the cab began to turn, Gene was back in the Buick and putting it

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where the taxi had been. He looked at the trees lining the boulevard and saw he wasn't in exactly the right spot. He started to back out, then saw the salmon-pink Cadillac in the distance, coming fast.

Gene nearly exploded when he saw the elderly taxi-driver at his elbow, bending towards him.

"Did you say seven or eight?" he asked.

"Eight!" Gene almost screamed, and the taxi-driver turned to go back to his cab, twenty yards away. Then he paused and looked round. His eyes widened, and Gene heard a squeal of brakes and a scream of tires.

Gene's head banged sickeningly against the side window as the salmon-pink Cadillac smashed into the rear of the Buick and slewed it sidewise. Sick, dizzy, less than half conscious, he slumped over the wheel.

Vaguely he was aware he'd hit his head a lot harder than usual.

Seconds later the far door of the Buick was opened, someone who smelled nice slid along the seat, and abruptly his head was on a soft breast and a gentle hand was probing his head. He tried to look up.

She was as wonderful as ever. Glorious black hair; the softest, kindest eyes he had ever seen; a face so lovely that he caught his breath as he always did; and a figure that proclaimed its perfection even through the long blue dress which swathed it.

"Lady, dames like you should take a cab," a voice was saying. "If I'd stayed where I was you'd of hit me!"

Irritation brushed away some of Gene's daze. All the other times Belinda and he had had this moment to themselves.

"I'm all right," he said.

"I'm terribly sorry," Belinda was saying. "There was a patch of oil—"

"Bud, if you want a witness," said the other voice, the voice Gene wished would go away, "I'm your man. Dames like this one—"

"I'm all right," Gene insisted. "Go and deliver that message."

"You're badly shaken," Belinda said. "My house is right here. Could you walk if I helped you?"

That was the last he remembered for a while. He had a vague idea the taxi-driver conquered his indignation sufficiently to help Belinda get him inside. Gene was thinking dazedly: *This is new. This never happened before.*

Previously she had driven him home. He'd never been taken into the house.

When he opened his eyes again he was lying on a sofa and Belinda was bathing his head with cold water. Apparently she had got rid of the taxi-driver.

"Lie still," she said. "I'll send for a doctor in a minute."

He didn't want a doctor. He

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wanted Belinda to go on caring for him.

"Don't bother," he said. "I'll be all right soon."

"I guess you will," she said, sponging his head gently, "but we'd better make sure."

"I'm allergic to doctors. And you're doing a wonderful job."

She smiled, that wonderful warm smile.

"All right," she said. "I won't excite the patient. Now I'll have to go out and move the car. You stay where you are and don't worry about anything. The accident was entirely my fault and I'll have your car fixed right away."

Gene felt dizzy again after she had gone. He had certainly had a much harder knock on the head than usual. That must have been because in his haste he hadn't put the Buick in exactly the right place.

He marvelled at the way tiny differences created a whole new series of events. Already, only minutes after meeting Belinda for the first time, he was on a completely new track. He was in her house. This was better, much better.

Belinda was back. "Don't move," she said. She sat on the sofa in front of him, looked at the side of his head and a worried expression came into her eyes. "It's bleeding again," she said. "Sure you don't want me to send for a doctor?"

"Quite sure," said Gene. "I'll be all right in a minute. My name's Gene Player, by the way."

"I'm Belinda Morton. Player . . . I wonder if I know a friend of yours. Do you know Harry Scott?"

"Yes," said Gene.

"He's talked about you," said Belinda. "He's a great friend of mine. As a matter of fact . . ."

She jumped up. "I must bathe your head again," she said. And in a moment she was back with a sponge and cold water.

"I can't say how sorry I am about this," she said. "I braked too hard, skidded on a patch of oil, and—"

"Don't keep apologizing," said Gene. "I'm beginning to be very glad it happened."

She laughed deliciously. Belinda was no Doreen. She was poised, assured.

"That's the nicest compliment I ever had," she said. "And you managed to say it as if you meant it."

"I did mean it. It wouldn't be a compliment if I didn't. Let me apologize for a change. I'm afraid there's some of my blood on your dress."

She smiled. "As if that mattered."

Gene realized then that he'd had a vague hope that when he met her, buttressed by Doreen's love, he'd find he didn't really care about Belinda after all, and could

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return happily to Doreen. It was no good. He was in love with Belinda all over again.

Once again, through the superficial things they were saying, he felt her warmth and kindness and sincerity, and he ached for her as always.

"Why are you allergic to doctors?" she asked.

"If you must have the truth, I'm not really. I'm just afraid he'd find out I was malingering and then I'd have no excuse to lie here and look at you."

Belinda laughed again. There was some surprise in her laugh. Gene sounded as if he meant these things he was saying. But he *couldn't* mean them. She'd never seen him before in her life.

"You sound to me like a very accomplished wolf," she observed.

He sighed. "I guess if I said I'd fallen in love with you at first sight I'd merely confirm your opinion?"

"You certainly would."

"Then I'd better not say it."

She was frowning now. "Don't do it, Mr. Player," she said.

"Don't do what?"

"Don't say so earnestly things you don't mean. I'm old-fashioned. I like truth. I like to believe I know the truth when I hear it. It bothers me to hear anybody lying so convincingly."

"Isn't there a simpler explanation?"

"What?"

"That I am telling the truth. That I am in love with you—Belinda."

She was at a loss, a rare occurrence. She remembered the blood on her dress and seized on it as an excuse to do something. "Excuse me while I change my dress," she said. "Don't move."

"Do you really think I would?"

With a last quizzical glance, she was gone.

Gene knew he was gambling wildly. He might be throwing away an excellent chance; on the other hand, everything else had failed. . . .

The telephone on the table beside him buzzed. He picked it up.

"Belinda?" said a voice he knew well.

"No—guess who," he retorted.

There was a surprised pause. "Gene Player," said Harry's voice. "I didn't know you knew Belinda." He didn't sound pleased.

"Well, I do," said Gene.

"Is she back? I guess she must be or you wouldn't be there. Can I speak to her?"

"Not just at the moment. Shall I ask her to call you back, Harry?"

"Maybe it doesn't matter." The tone was faintly huffy. "If she's forgotten she was supposed to be meeting me—"

"Oh, was she? I didn't know about that. She hasn't said anything about it to me."

"She wouldn't." And this time Harry's tone was decidedly huffy.

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"Well, never mind. Be seeing you."

Gene's heart was pounding again. A real turning point! The way it had gone before was that Belinda had caused a minor accident, met Gene, taken him home, and gone on to meet Harry. Harry had been affectionate after her long stay in Canada, and Gene hadn't yet registered on Belinda's life. By the time Gene had seen her again five days later, it was too late.

Gene wondered what to say when she came back. Not mention the call? But later Harry would say he had called and spoken to Gene.

He had no more time to think, for Belinda was back, in a flowered-silk negligée. For a couple of seconds Gene gaped at her. She just wasn't the sort of girl to entertain strangers in a negligée.

"Did I hear the phone?" she said.

So that was it. She'd heard the phone and slipped on a wrap.

"Yes—Harry Scott," Gene said. "He said something about it didn't matter."

"Oh."

"Harry isn't a rival, is he?" Gene demanded.

She stared at him, then laughed helplessly. "I never met anybody like you. You lie on my sofa bleeding and making violent love to me five minutes after I smash your car and knock a hole in your head."

"Sit down and smooth my fevered brow," said Gene.

She did so. Her wrap fell open and she didn't seem to mind. Not that she was anything like indecent underneath—she wore a slip which would have been a respectable dress in any other year but 1975. Nevertheless, she wasn't exactly discouraging him.

"Is he?" Gene asked.

"Is who what?"

"Is Harry a rival?"

She laughed again. "Not exactly. He's just a friend. And if he didn't really care whether we went out today or not, probably not as close a friend as I thought."

She didn't seem to care about that, either.

And Gene knew that he'd won.

Not over weeks, months, years, as he'd expected. Not with a tremendous effort. Not by brilliant planning, passionate love-making, tender love letters.

Simply by hitting his head a little harder and telling Belinda honestly that he loved her, before Harry had a chance to tell her the same thing.

He hadn't won Belinda yet, but he'd won the chance to win Belinda. Something he'd never had before.

He wasn't up against an immutable.

But now there was something to clear up, before it became im-

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portant. "Look, Belinda," he said. "I took that call from Harry just now. I don't want . . . you said you didn't like people who lied. I don't want you ever to think I lied. He only said it didn't matter after I gave him the idea that I was in love with you myself. That wasn't a lie."

She was staring steadily at him. "No," she said. "I don't think it was."

He sat up. The room swam as he did so, but then he caught Belinda's shoulders and was all right. Direct action had taken him a long way already. It didn't seem that it would let him down now.

He kissed her.

As he did so the doorbell rang.

They could have ignored it, but Gene drew back involuntarily, thinking of Harry, and by the time he realized it couldn't be Harry, because Harry hadn't had time to be at the door even if he phoned from the nearest callbox, it was too late.

Belinda got up and went out.

Five seconds later a whirlwind burst in. It was female and it was crying. It threw itself across Gene's legs, crying now with relief; because he was not badly hurt.

It was, naturally, Doreen.

"I got your message," she said. "The man who brought it said you'd been hurt. Oh, Gene, I hope nothing like that ever happens to me again. I know what we agreed. But I can't help it, I love you."

Over her blonde head Gene saw Belinda come back into the room. She was surprised, a little hurt. Only very slightly hurt, because she couldn't possibly be in love with him yet.

Gene knew he could still have Belinda. A few kind words to Doreen, to show that she had never been anything important to him, and she would control herself with an enormous effort and go. He could tell Belinda the truth about Doreen, and she would believe him, because it would be the truth.

His gaze met Belinda's over Doreen's golden head, and he saw Belinda halt suddenly and stare. She was staring at his eyes, and her own were softening.

Only then did he realize his own eyes were full of tears, and why.

He couldn't do it. He had lost Belinda again. He still loved her, would always love her. But he loved Doreen too, and knew it had to be she, not Belinda.

Belinda wouldn't believe what he wanted to tell her about Doreen, because it wouldn't be the truth.

He *was* up against an immutable.

He folded Doreen in his arms. "And you know what?" he said to her. "I love you. Always. Forever." He raised his eyes again to Belinda, who was still looking tender and puzzled. "And that's final," he added.

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*A handy ballistic guide for the layman interested in hitting—or in missing—such elusive moving targets as the Moon and the Sun . . . (This article went to press just before our Pioneer IV passed the moon; the facts, with obvious exceptions, remain the same.)*

# OF CAPTURE AND ESCAPE

*by Isaac Asimov*

On January 2, 1959, the Soviet Union sent up a missile which was particularly notable for three things:

(1) It reached and passed the orbit of the Moon.

(2) It was not captured by the Moon; that is, it did not take up a closed orbit about the Moon.

(3) It took up a closed orbit about the Sun and became our first artificial planet.

I'd like to consider each of these points in this month's article. (I ought also to consider a fourth remarkable point, which is that the missile was sent up on my birthday; but, upon consideration, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that this is without any special significance.)

First, what does it take to reach the orbit of the Moon by means of a ballistic missile? (A ballistic missile, of course, is any projectile which receives an initial impulse of some sort and thereafter moves under the influence of inertia and gravitational forces only.)

If such a missile is fired straight up (*i.e.*, directly away from Earth's center) the maximum height it will reach will depend (a) on the strength of the initial impulse upward and (b) the strength of Earth's gravitational pull downward.

Naturally, the greater the initial impulse upward, the greater the height reached. You might expect that doubling the initial impulse will double the height reached, but that is too pessimistic. The higher the missile reaches, the weaker the gravitational drag upon it. The second half of its



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climb meets less resistance therefore and is correspondingly extended.

Consequently, doubling the initial impulse *more* than doubles the maximum height reached, and the more you increase the initial impulse, the more drastically do you increase the maximum height reached.

Table 1 gives the maximum height attained from various initial velocities of the missile. Initial velocity is a measure of the strength of the push given the missile. (Naturally, there are complicating factors. There is air resistance; there is the fact that the push of the rocket motors isn't administered instantaneously, but is spread over several minutes; and so on. Since we're all friends here, I'm taking the privilege of ignoring such matters and leaving them to the missile engineers, who are most welcome to them.)

Notice how quickly the maximum height increases, especially at speeds higher than 6 miles a second, or, if you prefer, 21,600 miles an hour. (I have always had a liking for the use of "miles per

**Table 1**

| Initial Velocity of Missile (miles per second) | (miles per hour) | Maximum Height Above Earth's Surface (miles) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3,600 | 80 |
| 2 | 7,200 | 350 |
| 3 | 10,800 | 900 |
| 4 | 14,400 | 1,940 |
| 5 | 18,000 | 4,180 |
| 5.5 | 19,800 | 6,450 |
| 6.0 | 21,600 | 11,100 |
| 6.5 | 23,400 | 25,800 |
| 6.6 | 23,760 | 34,300 |
| 6.7 | 24,120 | 46,300 |
| 6.8 | 24,480 | 73,600 |
| 6.85 | 24,660 | 102,800 |
| 6.90 | 24,840 | 170,000 |
| 6.92 | 24,912 | 221,000 |
| 6.95 | 25,020 | 454,000 |
| 6.98 | 25,130 | ∞ |

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second" as the unit for high velocities, but to a nation of automobile drivers, "miles per hour" seems more natural. Besides, newspapers and allied information-mongers use "miles per hour" exclusively, perhaps because larger and flashier numbers are involved. So I'll use both units throughout.)

A missile leaving Earth with an initial velocity of 6.92 miles a second (24,912 miles per hour) will reach a height of 221,000 miles before coming to its slow halt and beginning to fall back. This is just about the distance of the Moon at its closest approach to the Earth ("perigee").

If, however, the missile leaves Earth at a velocity of 6.90 miles a second (24,840 miles an hour), it falls 50,000 miles short of the Moon. A difference of 0.02 miles a second (72 miles per hour) to begin with means a 50,000 mile discrepancy to end with.

It is for this reason that when one of our own Moon-probes reached only a third of the way to the Moon, it did *not* mean we had only attained a third of the necessary velocity. Actually, we had attained over 98 percent of the necessary velocity. It's just that the last percent or so is what carries the missile the remaining two-thirds of the way to the Moon.

The measure of Soviet missile superiority, therefore, does not lie in the fact that they reached the Moon's orbit and we didn't. We ourselves were within a hair-breadth of reaching the Moon's orbit, for all we went only a third of the way. More serious is the fact that the Soviet missile was much more massive than the ones we were sending up, which points once again to the fact that they are routinely handling more powerful rockets than we are.

To go back to Table 1, a missile leaving Earth at a velocity of 6.98 miles a second (25,130 miles per hour—or something like 216 miles per hour faster than is required to reach the Moon's orbit) has no maximum height. If you like, its maximum height is infinite, symbolized as $\infty$ in the table. Such a missile would move away from Earth forever, assuming no interference from gravitational fields of other bodies. The velocity of 6.98 miles a second (25,130 miles an hour) is therefore the "escape velocity" from Earth's surface.

Imagine a missile that has left the Earth's surface at precisely escape velocity. As it travels away from the Earth, its velocity decreases inversely as the square root of its distance from Earth's center. (When the distance has been multiplied by 4, the velocity has been decreased by 2.) The result is shown in Table 2.

Earth's gravitational pull is constantly decreasing the missile's

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velocity, but with increasing distance, the pull loses power and decreases the velocity at a slower and slower rate. The velocity therefore get closer and closer to zero as the missile recedes from Earth, but never quite gets to zero.

If the missile had left at less than escape velocity, Earth's gravity would have managed to bring the missile's velocity to zero at some finite distance and the missile would then fall back. If the missile leaves at a speed greater than escape velocity, its velocity decreases and decreases with distance but never falls below a certain velocity greater than zero, however far it travels. The higher the initial velocity, the higher the final minimum. (All this assumes the presence of no other gravitational fields in the Universe, gumming up the works.)

Let's put it another way. A missile leaving Earth at a velocity less than escape velocity follows an elliptical orbit. An ellipse is a closed curve, so that the missile does not depart more than a certain dis-

**Table 2**

| Distance from the Center of the Earth (miles) | Velocity of Missile Fired at Escape Velocity (miles per second) | (miles per hour) |
|---|---|---|
| 4,000 (Earth's surface) | 6.98 | 25,130 |
| 8,000 | 4.93 | 17,800 |
| 12,000 | 4.04 | 14,500 |
| 16,000 | 3.49 | 12,550 |
| 20,000 | 3.12 | 11,210 |
| 40,000 | 2.21 | 7,950 |
| 80,000 | 1.56 | 5,620 |
| 120,000 | 1.27 | 4,570 |
| 160,000 | 1.10 | 3,960 |
| 221,000 (Moon at perigee) | 0.95 | 3,410 |
| 253,000 (Moon at apogee) | 0.88 | 3,160 |
| 400,000 | 0.70 | 2,510 |
| 1,000,000 | 0.44 | 1,580 |
| ∞ | 0.00 | 0 |

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tance from the Earth. If the elliptical orbit happens to intersect Earth's surface, the missile crashes its first time round, as our Moon-probes did. If the elliptical orbit does not intersect Earth's surface, artificial satellites *a la* the Sputniks and Explorers are the result.

A missile leaving Earth at a velocity just equal to escape velocity, takes up a parabolic orbit. A parabola is an open curve that never closes back on itself. Consequently, any object leaving Earth on a parabolic orbit never returns, barring the interference of the gravitational fields of other heavenly bodies.

If a missile leaves Earth at more than escape velocity, it follows a hyperbolic orbit. A hyperbola is also an open curve—even more open than a parabola, in a manner of speaking—so the missile once more never returns.[1]

Returning now to Table 2 (this gets complicated but I'm slowly building up a line of argument which, I hope, I can put to good use) I want to point out a special significance of the "velocity" column. The velocity of the missile which began at escape velocity remains at escape velocity throughout!

To be sure, the actual velocity of the missile is continually decreasing as its distance from Earth increases; but so does the escape velocity. And the escape velocity keeps pace throughout; for it, too, varies inversely as the square root of the distance from Earth.

Suppose you were to start from scratch at a distance 8,000 miles from Earth's center, which is equivalent to 4,000 miles above Earth's surface. (Imagine, in other words, that you were on top of a mountain—a mythical one—4,000 miles high.) Up there Earth's gravitational pull would be only one-fourth what it is at sea-level. There would be that much less drag on the missile and a smaller initial velocity would suffice to kick it into a parabolic orbit. To be exact, 4.93 miles a second (17,800 miles per hour) would suffice.

And from a mountain 80,000 miles high, an initial velocity of 1.56 miles a second (5,620 miles per hour) would suffice. And from a mountain 1,000,000 miles high, 0.44 miles a second (1,580 miles per hour) would suffice.

At no finite distance from Earth, however great, would escape velocity actually be zero. At any finite distance, an object completely at rest with respect to Earth would start moving toward the Earth in response to its gravitational pull—provided no other gravitational field interfered. To prevent the object from falling to Earth, some definite push would be needed even though an infini-

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tesimally small one if the distance were great.

All this holds true for a missile (or a meteor) passing close by Earth from some outer-space starting point.

Suppose a meteor passed Earth at a distance of 120,000 miles from its center and had a velocity (with respect to Earth) of less than 1.27 miles a second (4,570 miles per hour). Since the meteor's velocity is less than the escape velocity at its point of approach, it is forced into an elliptical orbit about the Earth. It is captured.

If its velocity were exactly 1.27 miles a second (4,570 miles an hour) it would take up a parabolic orbit; if its velocity were greater it would take up a hyperbolic orbit. In both cases, its direction of travel would be changed and it would curve about Earth more or less sharply. But in neither case would it be captured. It would go shooting off into space never to return.

Of course, both parabolic and hyperbolic orbits use the *center* of the Earth as a focus. If the meteor is aimed in such a fashion that its new orbit will pass within 4,000 miles of the Earth's center, it will intersect Earth's surface. The meteor will then enter our atmosphere and flame to death. However, hitting the Earth is not the same as being captured by the Earth.

Since escape velocity increases with decreasing distance from Earth, a meteor is more likely to be captured if it passes close to Earth, than if it passes at a distance. A meteor travelling at a velocity of 3.12 miles a second (11,210 miles per hour) relative to the Earth, will be captured if it passes Earth at a distance of less than 20,000 miles, but not if it passes Earth at a distance greater than that. Below 20,000 miles its velocity is less than escape velocity; above, it is higher than escape velocity.[2]

The more massive a planet is, the higher its escape velocity at all distances, and the more likely it is to capture invading meteors and planetoids. Jupiter, for instance, with a mass 318 times that of Earth, has an escape velocity at its surface of 37.3 miles per second (134,000 miles per hour.) Since Jupiter's surface is some 40,000 miles from its center, the comparable escape velocity in the case of Earth is only 2.21 miles a second (7,950 miles per hour.) At a distance of 1,000,000 miles from Jupiter's center, the escape velocity is 13.2 miles a second (47,500 miles per hour) as compared to 0.44 miles a second (1,580 miles per hour) for a comparable distance from Earth. It is not surprising then that the seven outermost of Jupiter's twelve satellites are generally considered to be captured planetoids.

But if a more massive planet

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is a more efficient capturer of wandering objects, a less massive astronomical body should be a less efficient capturer. That brings us to the Moon, which is only 1/81 as massive as the Earth and should therefore be a very poor capturer of meteors and assorted debris, such as missiles.

The escape velocity from the Moon's surface is a mere 1.49 miles a second (5,360 miles per hour) and this falls off, in the usual way, in inverse ratio to the square root of the distance from the Moon's center. Escape velocities at various distances from the Moon are given in Table 3.

To be captured by the Moon, a missile must pass the Moon at a velocity less than the escape velocity at that distance. What's more, the velocity involved is the velocity relative to the Moon, not relative to the Earth.

The Moon, you see, is itself moving at a velocity of about 0.64 miles a second (2,300 miles per hour) with respect to the Earth. Suppose, then, a missile shot from Earth at 6.92 miles a second (24,912 miles per hour) just makes it to the Moon's orbit and hangs momentarily suspended at zero velocity (with respect to the Earth) at a distance of 4,500 miles from the Moon's surface (5,500 from its center).

The Moon, however, is retreating from it, or advancing toward it, or passing to one side of it (depending on the exact position of the missile with respect to the Moon) at 0.64 miles a second (2,300 miles per hour), which becomes the missile's velocity *relative to the Moon.* This velocity is just a bit over the Moon's escape velocity at the distance of 5,500 miles from its center.

If the missile had been fired with a greater initial velocity, so that it was still moving at some velocity or other when it reached the Moon's orbit, its velocity relative to the Moon would be greater still.

It follows then that any missile that misses the Moon's center by 5,500 miles or more cannot be captured by the Moon and will not move into an orbit about the Moon, no matter how slowly the missile is going. The respective motions may be such that the missile may *hit* the Moon, but that's another thing. It may hit the Moon but it won't be captured by the Moon in the sense that it will go into a closed orbit about it.

A missile fired from Earth at escape velocity will pass the Moon (at perigee) at 0.95 miles a second (3,410 miles per hour.) Thanks to the Moon's own motion, which will be roughly at right angles to that of the missile, the missile's velocity with respect to the Moon will be 1.15 miles a second (4,140 miles per hour.) This is the Moon's escape velocity

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**Table 3**

| Distance from the Center of the Moon (miles) | Velocity of Missile Fired From Moon at Escape Velocity (miles per second) | (miles per hour) |
|---|---|---|
| 1,000 (Moon's surface) | 1.49 | 5,360 |
| 1,500 | 1.21 | 4,360 |
| 2,000 | 1.06 | 3,820 |
| 2,500 | 0.94 | 3,380 |
| 3,000 | 0.86 | 3,100 |
| 3,500 | 0.80 | 2,880 |
| 4,000 | 0.74 | 2,560 |
| 4,500 | 0.70 | 2,520 |
| 5,000 | 0.66 | 2,375 |
| 5,500 | 0.63 | 2,270 |
| ∞ | 0.00 | 0 |

at a distance of about 1,600 miles from its center. Such a missile would therefore have to come within 600 miles of the Moon's surface before it can be captured and go into an orbit about the Moon.

A missile fired from Earth at 7.37 miles per second (26,500 miles per hour) will pass the Moon at a velocity of 1.34 miles per second (4,820 miles per hour) with respect to the Earth, but a velocity of 1.49 miles per second (5,360 miles per hour) with respect to the Moon. This is the Moon's escape velocity at its surface. A missile fired from Earth at this velocity or above cannot be captured by the Moon, no matter how close to the Moon it passes, not even if it grazes its surface. (I repeat, it can *hit* the Moon, but again I repeat, that's a different thing.)

So the limits for success are narrow. A missile must be fired at an initial velocity of at least 6.92 miles per second (24,910 miles an hour) or it won't reach the Moon; and it must be fired at a velocity of less than 7.37 miles per second (26,500 miles an hour) or it can't be captured by the Moon. And even within that narrow range of velocities, capture by the Moon is only possible if the missile passes quite close to the Moon. A miss of not more than 4,500 miles from the Moon's surface is the maximum, and this leeway rapidly decreases as you approach the upper limit of the permissible velocity range.

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The Soviet missile is reported to have crossed the Moon's orbit at a velocity (relative to Earth) of 1.4 miles a second (5,500 miles per hour.) This implies a beginning velocity of perhaps as high as 7.5 miles a second (27,000 miles per hour). If the Soviet scientists planned that initial velocity, they couldn't have expected capture, or wanted it.

In fact, ballistic missiles are so hard to place into an orbit about the Moon that I wonder if it's even sensible to try. It might be better to make the missile non-ballistic. That is, to supply a final delayed rocket blast which could be set off by radio at such a time and in such a direction as to decrease the velocity of the missile relative to the Moon and make it capturable.

This brings us to the final point I raised at the beginning of the article, the question of orbiting about the Sun.

As I pointed out in my article "Catching up With Newton" (*F&SF*, December 1958), the escape velocity from the Sun, even way out here at Earth's orbit, 93 million miles from the Sun, is still 26.4 miles per second (95,040 miles per hour.) I left it at that point, but let's carry it further now.

The figure, 26.4 miles a second (95,040 miles per hour) refers, of course, to velocity relative to the Sun. If the Earth were at rest with respect to the Sun, we would have to fire a missile at that initial velocity to free it of the Sun's grip. However, the Earth is *not* at rest with respect to the Sun, but travels in an orbit about the Sun at a velocity of 18.5 miles a second (66,600 miles per hour.)

Suppose, then, we were to fire a missile in the direction of the Earth's motion. It would already be travelling 18.5 miles a second (66,600 miles per hour) with respect to the Sun before it started. Giving it additional velocity would raise the figure (like flying an airplane down-wind). A velocity of 7.9 miles a second (28,400 miles per hour) would just suffice to raise the missile's velocity to the point where it could escape the Solar system altogether, provided it didn't hit something on the way.

This is the most economical way of freeing a missile from the grip of both Earth and Sun.

If a missile were fired at right angles to Earth's motion, either directly toward or away from the Sun, it would receive some but not all the benefit of Earth's motion (like an airplane flying cross-wind). The missile would have to be fired at an initial velocity of 18.8 miles a second (67,680 miles per hour) to attain escape from the Solar system.

If it were fired in the direction opposite to the Earth's motion,

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Earth's motion would not be helping but hindering. The missile would require the full initial velocity of escape from the Sun plus enough more to neutralize the Earth's motion, (like an airplane flying upwind). For a missile so fired to escape would require an initial velocity of 44.9 miles a second (161,600 miles per hour.)

The Soviet missile was fired at a time when the Moon was in "last quarter." At this time, the Moon is directly ahead of the Earth in their mutual path around the Sun, so the Soviets were firing in the direction of Earth's motion. Nevertheless, if we remember that the probable initial velocity of the missile might have been as high as 7.5 miles a second (27,000 miles per hour) this is still insufficient to allow escape from the Sun, and the missile remained in orbit about the Sun.

To be sure, it has a higher velocity than the Earth has, so that its orbit bellies out into the space between Earth and Mars. (Since the missile's velocity is higher than Earth's, it makes a slightly more effective attempt, so to speak, to get away from the Sun, and it gets nearly to Mars before the Sun pulls it back.) As a result, the missile's year is 15 months long, rather than 12 months long as is Earth's.

The two orbits do cross, however, and some day, both missile and Earth may be at the crossing point simultaneously, in which case the missile will finally come home. Once the missile's orbit is calculated with enough precision (including the perturbing effects of the pull of the Moon and of Mars and so on) the time of collision (if ever) may be calculated well in advance.

One last question: Was there any chance that the Soviet missile might have fallen into the Sun?

Well, let's see what's required. Suppose you aimed a missile directly at the Sun. It would travel toward the Sun, yes, but at the same time it would retain Earth's motion of 18.5 miles a second (66,600 miles per hour) in a direction at right angles to its aimed line of motion at the Sun. It's overall motion would be a combination of both motions. Earth's sidewise motion would therefore carry the missile around the Sun in an elliptical orbit, if its initial velocity with respect to Earth were less than 18.8 miles a second (67,680 miles per hour)—this being the Solar escape velocity for a missile fired at right angles to Earth's motion.

If the missile were pointed at the Sun and fired at exactly escape velocity, the component due to Earth's motion would carry the missile about the Sun in a parabolic orbit; if it were greater than escape velocity it would go about the Sun in a hyperbolic orbit.

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The greater the velocity in the direction of the Sun, the flatter the hyperbola and the closer it would approach the center of the Sun at its closest approach. If you aimed at the center of the Sun, no velocity short of the infinite would enable you to hit the center, thanks to the sidewise component of motion.

However, you wouldn't have to hit the center of the Sun; hitting one edge of the Sun (and the Sun's edge, or surface, is 430,000 miles from its center) would be enough. To carry the missile all the way to the Sun (93,000,000 miles) before Earth's sidewise motion would carry it the 430,000 miles from center to surface would require an initial velocity that is less than infinite but still considerably greater than any we can hope to impose upon a missile at present.

Of course, why aim at the Sun's center? Why not aim to one side of it, allowing Earth's motion to bring the missile to the Sun, instead of aiming at it and allowing Earth's motion to carry the missile past it? (This is like allowing for wind when you aim a gun.

The most economical way to neutralize Earth's motion is to shoot the missile in a direction directly opposite to its motion. If the missile is then fired at a velocity of 18.5 miles a second (66,600 miles per hour), Earth's motion with respect to the Sun is neutralized. The missile is then at rest with respect to the Sun, and it will proceed to fall into the Sun under the inexorable pull of Solar gravity.[3]

But an initial velocity equal to that of Earth's velocity is the absolute minimum required for having a missile hit the Sun. The Soviet missile's velocity came nowhere near this, so that there was no chance whatever of its hitting the Sun. Of course, it was fired in the wrong direction for this purpose anyway, so that it actually moved away from the Sun rather than toward it. Had the Soviet missile been fired in a direction opposite to the Earth's motion, it would not have fallen into the Sun, but it would have approached more closely than does the Earth. Its orbit would then have inched in toward Venus's orbit. It would have had a year of 9 months instead of 12.

Obviously, then, a spaceflight to Mars must start off in the direction of Earth's motion, while a spaceflight to Venus must start off in the direction opposite Earth's motion, if we wish to make economical use of the motion we already possess.

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[1] The two open arms of a parabolic curve (hair-pin like) become gradually parallel, so that an object in a parabolic orbit approaches an astronomic body from a certain direction, veers about it, and hurtles back in the same general direction from which it came, though con-

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siderably to one side. As for a hyperbola, its two open arms separate—and the more hyperbolic the hyperbola, the wider the angle of separation. An object in a hyperbolic orbit veers about an astronomic body and moves away in a direction that differs from that of its approach.

[2] Actually, meteors virtually always travel at velocities greater than Earth's escape velocity. Meteors either hit the Earth directly, or escape.

[3] Of course, the missile need not be completely at rest with respect to the Sun. If it is moving below a certain velocity at right angles to its direction of fall toward the Sun, it will still not manage to clear the Sun's surface by the time it has fallen 93 million miles—and phf-ft. A velocity as little as 1 mile a second (3,600 miles an hour) or less will not be enough to save it from collision. Allowing for that, firing a missile at an initial velocity of 17.5 miles per second, in the right direction, will do.

## ADDENDUM

In Dr. Boyd's excellent article "Will Time Wait?" (*F & SF*, September, 1958) the question was raised as to whether time slows up as rate of motion increases. The article pointed to no definite answer, either "yes" or "no," although Dr. Boyd (and I) obviously favor "yes" over "no."

The logical thing to do, apparently, is to send an object as fast and as far as we can and measure the difference in time (if any) that results when a clock on the object is compared with a clock on Earth. Considering the limitations on how far and how fast we can send an object, however, we need clocks that are sensitive indeed.

Such clocks have been developed in the form of "masers." "Maser" is a madeup word (in the tradition of "radar" and "loran"), coming from the initial letters of "*m*icrowave *a*mplification by *s*timulated *e*mission of *r*adiation." The key working part of a maser is a small quantity of ammonia, or other substance the molecules of which undergo internal vibrations of extreme regularity. These vibrations fall short of perfect regularity by about one part in ten billion.

This near-perfect periodicity can be used (as can such imperfect periodicities as those of pendulums, hairsprings and the rotating Earth) to measure time, and such an "atomic clock" will not gain or lose more than a second in about three centuries.

Suppose, then, that you synchronize two masers, keep one at home, and place the other on a satellite which you send careening about the Earth at 18,000 miles an hour. If time does lag with motion, as it is believed to by most physicists, then the maser on the satellite ought to lose 1/20,000th of a second each day —a detectable discrepancy.

This has not yet been done, but another aspect of Einstein's theory —the very basis, in fact—has been under maser consideration. In

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1887, Michelson and Morley tried to measure the speed of light in such a way as to see if there were any difference in its speed when travelling along the line of Earth's motion and a line at right angles to Earth's motion. Though they had nothing as accurate as a maser clock, they expected a difference, and from that difference hoped to measure Earth's absolute motion against the fabric of space.

They found *no* difference! Einstein decided in later years that the speed of light in a vacuum was a constant, regardless of the motion of the body emitting the light, that absolute motion did not exist, and, beginning with that as an assumption, built up the structure of relativity.

Now the Michelson-Morley experiment has been repeated, but with a maser checking the difference (if any) in the speed of light, as its direction of motion was changed. The smallest detectable difference would suffice to put all of relativity on the chopping block. If the theory survived at all, it would only be with considerable fundamental change.

Perhaps it would have been most exciting if a difference had, after all, been detected. However, we can't arrange facts to suit our sense of drama. In the new experiment no difference was detected. Einstein's basic assumption withstands the finest scrutiny yet and his theory of relativity survives.

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## *Convention roundup*

The Tenth Annual Midwestcon will convene at the North Plaza Motel, 7911 Reading Road, Cincinnati 37, Ohio, on Saturday and Sunday, June 28 and 29, 1959. "All convivial fans are invited. Make reservations directly with the motel."

Westercon, the regional science fiction convention for the western states, will be held July 3, 4, and 5, 1959, with the Nameless Ones as hosts. Address Westercon, Box 92, 920 Third Ave., Seattle 4, Washington.

Detention, the 17th World Science Fiction Convention, will convene at the Pick-Fort Shelby Hotel in Detroit on Labor Day weekend, Sept. 4 through 7. Address Detention, 2218 Drexel St., Detroit 15, Michigan.

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*Mr. Goulart's memoir on Ralph Wollstonecraft Hedge fills a long, sorely felt need. Aficionados will surely respond to this material with delight; they will, no doubt, be even more pleased to learn that an expanded version of the work (in two quarto volumes, with decorated end-papers) will be published early next year under the colophon of The University of West Dakota—the publishers to whom all literate people already owe a large debt of gratitude for their* ENOCH SOAMES—A COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY, THE MINOR WORKS OF ABDUL ALHAZRED, THE HUNTING OF THE SON OF THE SNARK, *as well as their most recent,* SIXTEEN EXPERIMENTAL LIMERICKS BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

# *Ralph Wollstonecraft Hedge: A Memoir*

## by Ron Goulart

RALPH WOLLSTONECRAFT HEDGE was a particularly amiable recluse. However, because he spent his final years ducked down behind a discarded harmonium in the lumber room of his maternal aunt and, further, steadfastly refused to talk to interviewers, there is little biographical material available for the curious student who wishes to know more about the man many consider to be the logical successor to Charles Brockden Brown. To remedy this, I feel bound to set down my recollections of this writer I believe deserving of the mantle of Poe.

In this paper I will deal chiefly with Hedge's mature years since nothing is known of his early life. He apparently was found on a doorstep in his twenty-first year, with no recollection of his past. The doorstep itself was found in a forest in Bristol, R. I., where the Druids from the neighborhood held occasional outings up until the McKinley era. These early associations seemed to have little effect on Hedge, although in the autumn he would turn a russet gold color and exhibit a tendency to drift gently to the ground.

For several years, interrupted only by a wedding trip to Providence in 1923, I served Hedge as



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secretary, and also saw to it that no squirrels, animals of which he had an exaggerated fear, got to the upper floors of his shuttered colonial house. Thus I feel I knew this master of the macabre better than most. Indeed, in 1926 and the early part of 1927, when Hedge had hidden himself among the living room drapes, he spoke to no one but me, and that was only in a whisper.

Ralph Wollstonecraft Hedge spent a good deal of time behind things and so most of his tales were dictated. Usually to me, but several, especially in 1928, to a man named Collin A. Ruckersett. The stories Hedge wrote in his own crabbed hand were for the most part illegible. None of these latter were ever printed, except for a story called *At The Pits of Terror*, which appeared in St. Nicholas Magazine (I am not sure of the date, but I remember it was raining quite a lot that day). The version is, I contend, greatly garbled. I am sure Hedge did not include a character called Bunny Pitpat in the story. Nor was the tale meant to induce children to brush their teeth as frequently as possible, dealing as it did with the complex weird mythos Hedge had painstakingly built up.

After 1935 Hedge neither wrote nor dictated any further stories, except to ghostwrite three Big Little Books for the Whitman people. This task added not at all, in my opinion, to his stature as a master of the horror genre. When he ceased writing, RWH (as his circle called him) devoted himself to eating ice cream. He confided in me that he desired to do a major work in which he would compare and contrast all the existing flavors of ice cream, with an appendix covering sherbet and popsicles. It was Hedge's intention to devote six months to each flavor, but his untimely end cut him off before he had gotten much beyond chocolate. I, for one, have always been sorry that this work did not see completion. I am sure it would have shown yet another side of the man who gained such renown with his stories of grave robbing and lycanthropy.

Of course, RWH had a considerable influence, direct or otherwise, on the younger writers. George Worsnop Bangs, the youthful recluse of Paso Robles, California, was strongly influenced by Hedge's work, even to the point of signing Hedge's name to all his stories and tales. A circumstance, I might add, that has caused some amusing confusions in academic and scholarly circles. Rudyard Boland, the gifted assistant and macabrist of Yazoo, Mississippi, owed his early success to the kind literary advice and bundles of sandwiches that RWH sent him. And any but the most casual reader will see that

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Thomas Wolfe's *Of Time and The River* and Max Schulman's *Barefoot Boy With Cheek* are simply extended anagrams of Hedge's earlier *The Lurker in the Cabbage Patch.*

Unlike his weird stories Hedge was not weird at all. He was a small thin man with a round face and merry eyes, rather Dickensian in his speech. I believe he almost always wore a dark blue suit, but since he stood behind things so often, it is possible that he wore a blue coat and trousers of some other color. I cannot be sure. Hedge was not overly fond of animals, although in the spring of 1933 he took to carrying a manx cat around in a perforated shoe box, and sometime late in 1929 he dictated a fan letter to the artist of the comic-page strip *Barney Google,* expressing what I considered extravagant praise for the horse, Sparkplug. As I believe I have mentioned earlier, Hedge was violently afraid of squirrels. It is therefore somewhat ironic that during the Depression a great many squirrels took to hiding nuts all about the ground floor of Hedge's home. I have taken more than one nasty spill as a result of stepping unexpectedly on a cashew.

Ralph Wollstonecraft Hedge was married briefly in 1934 to a woman who had once driven a truck in St. Paul, Minnesota. I am not sure of her name because RWH was very shy in her presence and never introduced us. I have the feeling I heard somewhere that her name was Helen. She, whatever her name was, never understood Hedge's work and spent most of her time Indian wrestling with Collin A. Ruckersett. She moved away in 1935, taking two pounds of walnuts, and, outside of a Christmas card in 1937, we never heard of her again.

Only last year, while attending the jazz festival in Newport, I encountered several Hedge fans who asked me the familiar question about where RWH got his ideas. To the best of my knowledge, most of his best stories were the product of hallucinations. Many is the morning I would be sitting in the music room swatting squirrels only to have Hedge interrupt me by running in whooping. After I had locked the door and looked under everything, RWH would consent to dictate to me one of his famous yarns. It is in this way that his renowned *The Thing in the Dumbwaiter* and *The Shuffler Beyond the Transom* were composed. Readers who have noted a pronounced division in the middle of *The Peeper Round Corners* will be happy to learn that this story is the product of two separate hallucinations.

Most of Hedge's ideas were his own, but on rare occasions Collin

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A. Ruckersett would dress up in an old sheet and domino mask and scare RWH into a story. This method was only resorted to if RWH was behind in his work. To get him going on his novel, *The Straggler from the Moon Pit*, we had to buy quite a lot of Halloween masks and jump at him unexpectedly, which was hard to do with so many nut shells underfoot.

Most of RWH's better stories deal with the complicated mythos of the elder gods he created one day after reading *The American Weekly*. Essentially this mythos put forth the theory that beyond the gates of the universe lurked nameless, loathsome beings who were out to get Hedge. Most scholars agree that the best tales dealing with this mythos, especially *Here Comes the Vombis at the Door*, are worthy of Poe.

In late 1939, RWH was, as he had always feared would happen, carried off by the squirrels, and a career that added so much to American weird fiction came to a somewhat outré end. I will mention that I am again looking for a position as a confidential secretary, and close.

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*A fine trout-bearing stream, an alien fisherman, a local man fighting for his fishing rights. . . . As Izaak Walton said in an altogether different context: "This dish of meat is too good for any but anglers, or very honest men."*

# The One That Got Away

*by Chad Oliver*

WHEN BEAVER LODGE BURNED to the ground, Charlie Buckner didn't pay particular attention. He was sorry that Al and Rita had lost their investment, of course, but to tell the truth he didn't figure he'd miss all that neon anyway.

When Bob Sanderford's brand new Mountain Super Service Station blew up and took Bob with it, that was a shade more serious.

When the Lazy T Dude Ranch caught fire and blistered a batch of dudes, Charlie began to worry a little. Elkhorn Valley couldn't spare any dudes, and neither could Charlie.

He was reading a letter when the news came, and the letter had him riled up anyhow. It was from Old Kermit Thompson over in Carson Creek, and it got Charlie so hot under the collar that his rimless spectacles fogged up.

The pertinent part of the letter read as follows:

*Let me tell you something, Charlie boy, and you can pass it on to your hotshot Chamber of Commerce. The tourists over here in Carson Creek are catching so many trout that the game warden hasn't been to bed for a week. The streams are so full of fish that the water has to work up a sweat to get over them. They ain't no stock-pond babies, either. I thought you might enjoy the enclosed photos, which just represent an average catch over here.*

The pictures were of trout, naturally. Lovely trout, in full color. Big, husky trout. *Piles* of trout.

When the phone rang, Charlie stuffed the letter and the pictures into the back pocket of his jeans and picked up the receiver.

"Gunnison Ranch," he growled. "Buckner speaking."

"Charlie? Earl here. We got another one. The Lazy T is on fire, and a couple of people got hurt before they got out. I swear I don't know what's going on around here."



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"Anything I can do?"

"Nope, they got it under control now. But I'm beginning to think we've got a firebug on our hands. I thought you might want to check your cabins."

"Right. Thanks for calling, Earl. Let me know if anything else happens."

Charlie hung up, jammed on his battered straw hat, climbed into his new red jeep, and made the circuit of his tourist cabins.

Things seemed normal enough. The people from Dallas in Cabin 5 couldn't get the coal stove going, so Charlie opened the draft for them, hauled out the ashes, and showed them how to strike a match. The salesman from Oklahoma in Cabin 3 wasn't catching any fish, and Charlie explained to him that it wasn't customary to use a sinker with dry flies. The nervous lady in Cabin 7 had heard a mouse running over the bed springs, and Charlie assured her that it was merely a bird on the roof, meanwhile making a mental note that he was feeding the cats too much. His two regulars in the end cabin insisted that he have a cup of coffee with them, which killed an hour.

Charlie had sharp eyes, but he saw no signs of any firebug.

Still, he could be next.

There had been six big fires in Elkhorn Valley in the past two years. In fact, come to think of it, just about every modern building in the town had burned down. Maybe he ought to be thankful he'd stuck to his rustic cabins with outhouses, because it sure looked as though something funny was going on.

Charlie decided that he had better think out the problem in earnest. There was only one way to do that, of course.

He told Mary where he was going, which didn't please her unduly because she was ironing sheets, and got his thinking equipment ready.

He put his rod, trout basket, net, and waders into the jeep and drove off to go fishing.

He drove up Beaver Creek Canyon past the old mine and parked the jeep on a dirt cutoff that was hardly more than a pair of tire tracks that veered off toward the stream. He got his gear ready, filled his antediluvian pipe with tobacco from a red can, and lit up with a wooden kitchen match.

Charlie puffed in satisfaction. The spring thaws on the slopes of the Rockies had filled Beaver Creek with clean cold water, and the willows that lined the stream were green and fresh. The sky was cloudy and the air was cool and crisp.

He was aware that the tourists hadn't been doing too well on Beaver Creek in the last few months, but that didn't bother him any. The way he figured it, it was

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a miracle they caught any fish at all. Anyhow, he knew the trout were in there; he had dumped them in himself when he served his annual time on the Fish and Game Commission.

He waded into the stream and got down to business, casting with an accurate and flexible wrist. He may have been putting on the pounds around the middle, he thought, but he could still work Beaver Creek with the best of them.

In two hours he caught two fish, both of which he threw back.

He thought of Kermit Thompson and his photographs and muttered a few phrases that should have boiled the water in the stream.

He tried every fly he had with him. The trout sneered at all of them.

Along about noon, when the dudes began swarming over the stream with their fancy tackle, Charlie did the sensible thing. He waded out of the stream, arranged himself comfortably behind the shelter of a pile of rocks, pulled his straw hat down over his eyes, and went to sleep.

When he woke up two hours later, the first thing he noticed was that it was raining. It was more of a drizzle, really; a fine gray mist that slanted down from the mountains and glistened on the willows and flowers.

Charlie yawned, stood up, and stretched. He looked out at the stream idly, stared, and suddenly sat down again. He crawled forward and peered between the rocks, hardly believing his eyes. Charlie was a lot smarter than he looked, and he had been around some in his time. Just the same, he had never seen anything like *this* before.

There were three fishermen that he recognized by the stream. They were all tourists from Elkhorn Valley, and he could see their cars parked up on the road. They were all dressed up in the latest fishing duds and they all had rods in their hands—but they weren't fishing.

They weren't even in the water. They were standing by the side of the stream, absolutely motionless. They didn't move a muscle, and their faces were as blank as so many slabs of salami.

They looked frozen—literally.

There was one other man on the stream, and *he* was fishing. Fishing? He was murdering the fish. He was working his way upstream, whistling a little tune, and at every cast a fat trout leaped at his fly as though it were the grandfather of all the juicy worms that had ever lived. He landed trout until his basket sagged on his shoulder, and they were beauties.

The three men on the bank stood like statues, never even looking at the fisherman.

Charlie stared until his eyes hurt, feeling rather like Rip Van

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Winkle. What was going on? The man in the stream looked ordinary enough, although his costume was rather like Churchill's zipper suit, but seemingly made out of plastic of some sort. Whoever he was, he was some fisherman.

Along about five in the evening, when the sun was thin behind the clouds and the air was growing cold, the man climbed out of the stream. He knelt down on the bank, took something metallic out of the pocket of his clothing, and punched what appeared to be a button.

At once, the other three gentlemen came to life. They blinked their eyes and began to walk as though unaware that anything had happened. They headed straight for their cars, shaking their heads.

Charlie overheard a snatch of conversation between two of them as they went by:

"Do any good today, Joe?"

"No luck at all. I never even saw a fish."

"Me neither. I'm going to try the lake tomorrow. I'm pooped."

The cars drove off.

The man in the curious suit hauled out a long knife and began to clean his fish, happily sawing off heads and tossing them into the stream.

That was when the *thing* appeared.

It looked like a gray metallic box about ten feet square. It came drifting lazily down out of the sky without making a sound and landed by the bank of the stream. A door whispered open and yellow light spilled out. As far as Charlie could tell, the box was empty.

The man finished cleaning his fish, put his knife away, and stood up. He rubbed his cramped leg muscles, picked up his rod and trout basket, and started for the box.

Charlie had seen enough.

He got to his feet, spat accurately at a blue flower, and stepped out from behind the rocks.

"Hey, you!" he hollered. "Just a dad-blamed minute."

The oddly-dressed man stopped with one foot in the door of the metal box. He turned, his eyes wide with surprise. They were funny eyes, too.

Kind of violet, Charlie decided.

"Me friend," the man said rapidly. He looked just a trifle flustered.

"Like hell you are," Charlie retorted. "And what the devil kind of talk is that?"

The man made an effort and collected himself. It took him a moment to digest the words, and he frowned. "I beg your pardon. Are you a minister?"

"No," Charlie said, "I ain't."

"I assumed from your use of sacred words—you must forgive me. You startled me, and I seem to be a bit confused."

Charlie put his hands on his

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hips. "You got a license for those fish you caught?"

"Why, no. Of course not."

"You pay taxes?"

"No. I mean, I don't pay them *here*." The man groped for words. "Me friend."

"Don't start that again. I ain't no Indian. And you ain't no friend of mine. Who in blazes do you think you are, anyway?"

"My name is—ah—Onthal. I can explain—"

"You've got a powerful lot of explaining to do, Mr. Onthal. What did you do to those other fishermen?"

"The natives? Why, I merely immobilized them. Surely, Mr.—ah—er—"

"Buckner. Charlie Buckner."

"Surely, Mr. Buckner, you don't expect me to come all the way and fish with *others* on the stream. Get away from it all, that's the whole idea—"

"You own Beaver Creek?"

"Well no, not exactly—"

Charlie stuck his grizzled chin forward. "Mr. Onthal, we've been having a mess of fires over in Elkhorn Valley. You know anything about them fires?"

The man tried to back away and was stopped by the metal box. "Me friend," he said.

Charlie spat. "Sure, you're a real pal. Say, what kind of fly is that you were using? It's dynamite."

Still off-balance, the man fumbled for it and held it up as though he had never seen it before. "This? Why, it's just a common green-tailed Buster."

Charlie peered at it, but the light was getting bad and it was hard to see. He considered asking Onthal to step away from the lighted door, but decided not to push his luck too far.

"A green-tailed Buster, eh? Common, you say?"

"Oh, extremely." The man swallowed, then pulled himself together. He seemed suddenly taller. "See here, Mr. Charlie. You're playing with fire."

"The shoe," Charlie informed him, "is on the other foot."

"Shoe? Foot?" The man hesitated, and for a moment Charlie was afraid that he was going to come out with the Indian-Paleface routine again. He got back on the track, however. "I mean, I could simply *obliterate* you."

"Why don't you?"

The man was taken aback. "It seems—well, crude."

"There were people killed in those fires."

The man waved his hand. "Regrettable. But it was a mere side-effect, we didn't intend—"

Charlie spat again. "Don't bother explaining. Instead, let me suggest a good reason for not harming me. I've got something you want."

"You? Have something *we* want?"

"Yeah, me. The colorful native."

"I find that hard to believe . . ."

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"It's on the level, just the same." Charlie remembered that Onthal wasn't too hot on idioms. "It's the truth," he added.

"What is this—ah—item?"

Charlie settled his hat more firmly on his head. "Nothing doing, pal." He pointed vaguely up at the dark clouds. "You've got a ship up there, right?"

The man's mouth opened and closed but no sound came forth.

"I think you'd better haul me up there," Charlie said firmly, "and we'll talk a little turkey."

"Me—"

"I mean, I think we can make a deal. How about it?"

The man looked around for his voice and finally found it. "This is unprecedented."

"What have you got to lose? You can obliterate me up there if you've a mind to, can't you?"

"I suppose it could be done. Yes."

"Then let's get going. It's cold out here."

The man muttered something in an alien tongue and waved Charlie into the metal box.

Charlie stepped inside and took off his hat. The thing reminded him of an elevator.

Onthal joined him and the door shut.

There was a lifting sensation.

Charlie smiled.

As has been stated, Charlie was a great deal smarter than he looked . . .

The ship was just a spaceship, no more and no less. Of course, Charlie Buckner had never actually seen one before, but he read the papers and he knew what to expect. As a matter of fact, he didn't get to see this spaceship either; there were no windows in the box, and when the door opened again Charlie and Onthal were inside the ship.

"Quite a layout you got here," he said.

Onthal smiled. "Come with me. I will take you to the others."

Charlie followed him, keeping his eyes open. He was impressed, but hardly overwhelmed. The ship was on the plush side, just as he had anticipated.

When he saw the large room in which the other men were gathered, he relaxed. He was sure of himself now, on familiar ground. The room inside the spaceship had wooden panels with polished knotholes, a flashy bar—tended by a robot, but what the hell—and a big log fire blazing in a useless fireplace.

*I know these birds,* Charlie thought. *They're all the same, no matter where they come from.*

There was a sudden excited babble when Charlie made his entrance, all of it in an unfamiliar language.

Onthal held up his hand for silence. He cleared his throat, pleased with his own importance. "You know the rules, men," he

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said. "We speak only English when a native is present."

"What's he doing here?" a big balding man demanded, his face flushed with too many drinks. "What did you bring him here for?"

"He says that he—um—wishes to offer us a deal."

A slender blonde, whose function on a fishing trip was obviously other than piscatorial, giggled. "Isn't he quaint?"

To add to the local color, Charlie took out his pipe, filled it carefully, and lit it. Calmly, he flipped the match into the fireplace.

Another man, seemingly a person of some importance, stepped forward. "Your name, sir?"

"Charlie Buckner. And yours?"

"That does not concern you. We are not savages, Mr. Buckner. I will not pretend to offer you hospitality here. You will not be permitted to leave this ship alive."

"Glad to meet you, too." Charlie puffed on his pipe. "You're pretty jumpy, Clyde."

The man frowned. "You do not understand our position. We are not men of your world—"

"You can skip all that. I know all about you."

The man blinked. "You *do*?"

"Certainly. If you will be so good as to pour me a drink, I'll explain."

The man hesitated, then snapped his fingers. The robot rolled over with a tall glass on a tray. Charlie thanked him and sampled the drink. It was smooth. Definitely quality. Class.

Naturally.

"Well?" the man demanded.

Charlie sighed. "Back home, wherever that is, you people are successful businessmen. You work hard all the time, and the pressure builds up. When you take a vacation, you want to get away from it all. You like brief doses of unspoiled nature, and you like good fishing. Evidently, your own world is too citified for what you want, so you come to Elkhorn Valley. How am I doing?"

The man pursed his lips. "You're seriously suggesting that we'd bring a spaceship all the way from —well, all that way just to go fishing?"

"I'm not suggesting it. I know it. Look, amigo, I'm in the tourist business myself. I know how much money is spent every year just to go fishing somewhere. Why else would you come to our planet? You're away ahead of us in gadgets and machines, so we wouldn't have much to offer except scenery and fishing and hunting. I figured that right off. But why do you have to sneak around like you do? What are you afraid of?"

The man looked at the others who were gathered around and smiled. "You seem to be an intelligent man, Mr. Buckner. What do you think would happen to our

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fishing if the news got out that the Earth had been contacted from outer space?"

Charlie chewed that one over for a minute. It made sense. "You've got a point there. But I can't say much for the way you've conducted yourselves. You've got a lot to answer for."

"The Earth," the man said rather pompously, "is not yet ready for the galactic civilization. You would not be capable of accepting what we have even if it were offered to you—"

Charlie downed his drink, then gave the man explicit instructions as to how he could dispose of his galactic civilization. "I don't give a hang about all that junk. I'm talking about *me*. You don't pay taxes and you don't spend any money in Elkhorn Valley. You throw a fog around the other tourists so they don't get their share of fish. You burn buildings down—why, I don't know. Next thing, the other tourists—the paying customers—will stop coming. You call that fair?"

The man spread his hands with a we're-all-reasonable-men-here gesture. "Mr. Buckner, we have been visiting Elkhorn Valley for several of your years. It means a great deal to us. The problems of galactic administration and commerce—"

Charlie snorted.

"Well, never mind. You may find this hard to understand, Mr. Buckner, but we *love* Elkhorn Valley. We love it the way it is—primitive, unspoiled, rustic. You don't appreciate your own values. When you start putting up fancy clubs and internal combustion stations, you *ruin* Elkhorn Valley. We come a long way every year to find what we want, and we simply cannot permit this commercialization. That's what we're trying to get away from, don't you see?"

"So if we build something you don't like you burn it down?"

"Naturally. Upon occasion, we like to wander through the village. It is a tonic to us. We don't *want* any changes here."

"I've felt the same way myself, Clyde. But I've got a living to make."

The man shrugged. "That is unfortunate."

"Isn't it, though?" Charlie helped himself to another drink. The robot, he decided, was the most friendly person on the ship. "But I think we can make a deal."

The man chuckled. "Really, Mr. Buckner. I don't mean to be insulting, but you have nothing that we want."

"That's where you're barking up the wrong tree." Charlie sensed that he had lapsed into idiom again and corrected himself. "I mean, you are mistaken. I have what you want more than anything else. But you won't get it without a promise that I will be returned safely to Elkhorn Valley."

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"That's impossible. You know too much. I tell you, we absolutely *refuse* to get all tangled up with the local tribal governments. It would be the end of everything. We wouldn't get a moment's peace. Why, we might even have to go on television." The man shuddered.

"I can keep my mouth shut. Give me some tests or something if you don't believe it. I don't care a used salmon egg about men from another world, and I never worried any about Earth either. I care about my business and Charlie Buckner. Can't *you* understand that?"

"It sounds familiar," the man admitted.

"Okay. Deal or no deal?"

"Give him a chance," the blonde said, eying him speculatively.

"We'll see. What is this thing you have that you think we want, Mr. Buckner?"

Charlie smiled. He had them now.

He reached into the back pocket of his jeans and pulled out the letter from Old Kermit Thompson. He handed it over. Then he hauled out the photographs and handed *them* over.

The man's eyes widened. He read the juicy parts aloud:

*The tourists over here in Carson Creek are catching so many trout that the game warden hasn't been to bed for a week. The streams are so full of fish that the water has to work up a sweat to get over them. They ain't no stock-pond babies, either. . . .*

He passed the photographs around.

There was a collective murmur of astonishment.

Charlie stoked up his pipe again and moved closer to the fire. "I know you people," he said. "A dude is just a dude, no matter where he comes from. You folks came down here in your fancy ship and found a spot you liked. Then you never looked no farther. You come back every year to the same place. You never bothered with the other side of the hill. You were too lazy to get off the beaten track. Well, just take a look at them fish. The *tourists* are catching 'em like that over in Carson Creek, and they don't have the equipment that you people have got. Now, you take one of them there green-tailed Busters up to Carson Creek . . ."

Charlie let his voice trail off. He had been dealing with tourists for a long, long time. He figured he knew how to handle them. If there was one thing they couldn't resist, it was news about better fishing somewhere else.

There was a mild pandemonium in the spaceship room.

There were *piles* of trout in those photographs—*big* trout.

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Onthal pushed his way up to him, his violet eyes shining.

"Ah, Mr. Buckner?"

"Ummm?"

"How do we get to Carson Creek?"

Charlie hauled out the pencil and paper he always carried for just such occasions. He felt fine.

"Looky here. You just follow this road up Beaver Creek Canyon over the pass. Then you go on due north about fifteen-sixteen miles. You'll come to a little lake shaped like a heart—you can see it plain from the air. Then you angle off to the left here . . ."

Charlie was feeling pretty good.

A man seldom obliterates anyone who tips him off to better fishing.

A month or so later, things had quieted down considerably in Elkhorn Valley.

There hadn't been any more local fires, and the Lazy T Dude Ranch had been repaired. The fishing was better than it had been in some years, and all of Charlie's cabins were full.

Charlie felt a faint twinge of regret when he read in the paper about Kermit Thompson's place over on Carson Creek burning to the ground, but that was the way the old ball bounced.

He waited until Mary was busy with her ironing, then loaded up his red jeep. He checked the tank. It was full—plenty for the run over the pass.

Charlie figured he'd just mosey on over to Carson Creek and sample the fishing.

Maybe he'd even run across Onthal again.

He filled his pipe and lit it with a sigh of satisfaction.

Onthal wasn't a bad guy when you got to know him.

Besides, he wanted to get a *good* look at that green-tailed Buster.

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*"Though a poet by profession, I make my living by writing prose—biographies, historical novels, translations from various languages, critical studies, ordinary novels, and so forth." So says Robert Graves. The word "ordinary" seems grotesquely out of place in any discussion of the extraordinary author of* I, CLAUDIUS, HERCULES, MY SHIPMATE, THEY HANGED MY SAINTLY BILLY, *and, richly, so forth. See below.* *(See also note on page 4.)*

# The Shout

## By Robert Graves

WHEN WE ARRIVED WITH OUR BAGS at the Asylum cricket ground, the chief medical officer, whom I had met at the particular house where I was staying, came up. I told him that I was only scoring for the Lampton team today (I had broken a finger the week before, keeping wicket on a bumpy pitch). He said: 'Oh, then you'll have an interesting companion.'

'The other scoresman?' I asked.

'Crossley is the most intelligent man in the asylum,' answered the doctor, 'a wide reader, a first-class chess-player, and so on. He seems to have travelled all over the world. He's been sent here for delusions. His most serious delusion is that he's a murderer, and his story is that he killed two men and a woman at Sydney, Australia. The other delusion, which is more humorous, is that his soul is split in pieces—whatever that means. He edits our monthly magazine, he stage-manages our Christmas theatricals, and he gave a most original conjuring performance the other day. You'll like him.'

He introduced me. Crossley, a big man of forty or fifty, had a queer, not unpleasant, face. But I felt a little uncomfortable, sitting next to him in the scoring box, his black-whiskered hands so close to mine. I had no fear of physical violence, only the sense of being in the presence of a man of unusual force, even perhaps, it somehow occurred to me, of occult powers.

It was hot in the scoring box in spite of the wide window. 'Thunderstorm weather,' said Crossley, who spoke in what country people call a 'college voice,' though I could not identify the college. 'Thunderstorm weather makes us

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patients behave even more irregularly than usual.'

I asked whether any patients were playing.

'Two of them, this first wicket partnership. The tall one, B. C. Brown, played for Hants three years ago, and the other is a good club player. Pat Slingsby usually turns out for us too—the Australian fast bowler, you know—but we are dropping him today. In weather like this he is apt to bowl at the batsman's head. He is not insane in the usual sense, merely magnificently ill-tempered. The doctors can do nothing with him. He wants shooting, really.' Crossley began talking about the doctor. 'A good-hearted fellow and, for a mental-hospital physician, technically well advanced. He actually studies morbid psychology and is fairly well-read, up to about the day before yesterday. I have a good deal of fun with him. He reads neither German nor French, so I keep a stage or two ahead in psychological fashions; he has to wait for the English translations. I invent significant dreams for him to interpret; I find he likes me to put in snakes and apple pies, so I usually do. He is convinced that my mental trouble is due to the good old "antipaternal fixation"—I wish it were as simple as that.'

Then Crossley asked me whether I could score and listen to a story at the same time. I said that I could. It was slow cricket.

'My story is true,' he said, 'every word of it. Or, when I say that my story is "true," I mean at least that I am telling it in a new way. It is always the same story, but I sometimes vary the climax and even recast the characters. Variation keeps it fresh and therefore true. If I were always to use the same formula, it would soon drag and become false. I am interested in keeping it alive, and it is a true story, every word of it. I know the people in it personally. They are Lampton people.'

We decided that I should keep score of the runs and extras and that he should keep the bowling analysis, and at the fall of every wicket we should copy from each other. This made storytelling possible. . . .

Richard awoke one morning saying to Rachel: 'But what an unusual dream.'

'Tell me, my dear,' she said, 'and hurry, because I want to tell you mine.'

'I was having a conversation,' he said, 'with a person (or persons, because he changed his appearance so often) of great intelligence, and I can clearly remember the argument. Yet this is the first time I have ever been able to remember any argument that came to me in sleep. Usually my dreams are so different from waking that I can only describe them if I say: "It is as though I were living and

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thinking as a tree, or a bell, or middle C, or a five-pound note; as though I had never been human." Life there is sometimes rich for me and sometimes poor, but I repeat, in every case so different, that if I were to say: "I had a conversation," or "I was in love," or "I heard music," or "I was angry," it would be as far from the fact as if I tried to explain a problem of philosophy, as Rabelais's Panurge did to Thaumast, merely by grimacing with my eyes and lips.'

'It is much the same with me,' she said. 'I think that when I am asleep I become, perhaps, a stone with all the natural appetites and convictions of a stone. "Senseless as a stone" is a proverb, but there may be more sense in a stone, more sensibility, more sensitivity, more sentiment, more sensibleness, than in many men and women. And no less sensuality,' she added thoughtfully.

It was Sunday morning, so that they could lie in bed, their arms about each other, without troubling about the time; and they were childless, so breakfast could wait. He told her that in his dream he was walking in the sand hills with this person or persons, who said to him: 'These sand hills are a part neither of the sea before us nor of the grass links behind us, and are not related to the mountains beyond the links. They are of themselves. A man walking on the sand hills soon knows this by the tang in the air, and if he were to refrain from eating and drinking, from sleeping and speaking, from thinking and desiring, he could continue among them for ever without change. There is no life and no death in the sand hills. Anything might happen in the sand hills.'

Rachel said that this was nonsense, and asked: 'But what was the argument? Hurry up!'

He said it was about the whereabouts of the soul, but that now she had put it out of his head by hurrying him. All that he remembered was that the man was first a Japanese, then an Italian, and finally a kangaroo.

In return she eagerly told her dream, gabbling over the words. 'I was walking in the sand hills; there were rabbits there, too; how does that tally with what he said of life and earth? I saw the man and you walking arm in arm towards me, and I ran from you both and I noticed that he had a black silk handkerchief; he ran after me and my shoe buckle came off and I could not wait to pick it up. I left it lying, and he stooped and put it into his pocket.'

'How do you know that it was the same man?' he asked.

'Because,' she said, laughing, 'he had a black face and wore a blue coat like that picture of Captain Cook. And because it was in the sand hills.'

He said, kissing her neck: 'We

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not only live together and talk together and sleep together, but it seems we now even dream together.'

So they laughed.

Then he got up and brought her breakfast.

At about half past eleven, she said: 'Go out now for a walk, my dear, and bring home something for me to think about: and be back in time for dinner at one o'clock.'

It was a hot morning in the middle of May, and he went out through the wood and struck the coast road, which after half a mile led into Lampton.

('Do you know Lampton well?' asked Crossley. 'No,' I said,' I am only here for the holidays, staying with friends.')

He went a hundred yards along the coast road, but then turned off and went across the links: thinking of Rachel and watching the blue butterflies and looking at the heath roses and thyme, and thinking of her again, and how strange it was that they could be so near to each other; and then taking a pinch of gorse flower and smelling it, and considering the smell and thinking. 'If she should die, what would become of me?' and taking a slate from the low wall and skimming it across the pond and thinking, 'I am a clumsy fellow to be her husband'; and walking towards the sand hills, and then edging away again, perhaps half in fear of meeting the person of their dream, and at last making a half circle towards the old church beyond Lampton, at the foot of the mountain.

The morning service was over and the people were out by the cromlechs behind the church, walking in twos and threes, as the custom was, on the smooth turf. The squire was talking in a loud voice about King Charles, the Martyr: 'A great man, a very great man, but betrayed by those he loved best,' and the doctor was arguing about organ music with the rector. There was a group of children playing ball. 'Throw it here, Elsie, No, to me, Elsie, Elsie, Elsie.' Then the rector appeared and pocketed the ball and said that it was Sunday; they should have remembered. When he was gone they made faces after him.

Presently a stranger came up and asked permission to sit down beside Richard; they began to talk. The stranger had been to the church service and wished to discuss the sermon. The text had been the immortality of the soul: the last of a series of sermons that had begun at Easter. He said that he could not grant the preacher's premise that *the soul is continually resident in the body*. Why should this be so? What duty did the soul perform in the daily routine task of the body? The soul was neither the brain, nor the lungs, nor the stomach, nor the heart,

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nor the mind, nor the imagination. Surely it was a thing apart? Was it not indeed less likely to be resident in the body than outside the body? He had no proof one way or the other, but he would say: Birth and death are so odd a mystery that the principle of life may well lie outside the body which is the visible evidence of living. 'We cannot,' he said, 'even tell to a nicety what are the moments of birth and death. Why, in Japan, where I have travelled, they reckon a man to be already one year old when he is born; and lately in Italy a dead man—but come and walk on the sand hills and let me tell you my conclusions. I find it easier to talk when I am walking.'

Richard was frightened to hear this, and to see the man wipe his forehead with a black silk handkerchief. He stuttered out something. At this moment the children, who had crept up behind the cromlech, suddenly, at an agreed signal, shouted loud in the ears of the two men; and stood laughing. The stranger was startled into anger; he opened his mouth as if he were about to curse them, and bared his teeth to the gums. Three of the children screamed and ran off. But the one whom they called Elsie fell down in her fright and lay sobbing. The doctor, who was near, tried to comfort her. 'He has a face like a devil,' they heard the child say.

The stranger smiled good-naturedly: 'And a devil I was not so very long ago. That was in Northern Australia, where I lived with the black fellows for twenty years. "Devil" is the nearest English word for the position that they gave me in their tribe; and they also gave me an eighteenth-century British naval uniform to wear as my ceremonial dress. Come and walk with me in the sand hills and let me tell you the whole story. I have a passion for walking in the sand hills: that is why I came to this town . . . My name is Charles.'

Richard said: 'Thank you, but I must hurry home to my dinner.'

'Nonsense,' said Charles, 'dinner can wait. Or, if you wish, I can come to dinner with you. By the way, I have had nothing to eat since Friday. I am without money.'

Richard felt uneasy. He was afraid of Charles, and did not wish to bring him home to dinner because of the dream and the sand hills and the handkerchief: yet on the other hand the man was intelligent and quiet and decently dressed and had eaten nothing since Friday; if Rachel knew that he had refused him a meal, she would renew her taunts. When Rachel was out of sorts, her favourite complaint was that he was overcareful about money; though when she was at peace with him, she owned that he was the most generous man she knew, and that

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she did not mean what she said; when she was angry with him again, out came the taunt of stinginess: 'Tenpence-halfpenny,' she would say, 'tenpence-halfpenny and threepence of that in stamps'; his ears would burn and he would want to hit her. So he said now: 'By all means come along to dinner, but that little girl is still sobbing for fear of you. You ought to do something about it.'

Charles beckoned her to him and said a single soft word; it was an Australian magic word, he afterwards told Richard, meaning *Milk:* immediately Elsie was comforted and came to sit on Charles' knee and played with the buttons of his waistcoat for awhile until Charles sent her away.

'You have strange powers, Mr. Charles,' Richard said.

Charles answered: 'I am fond of children, but the shout startled me; I am pleased that I did not do what, for a moment, I was tempted to do.'

'What was that?' asked Richard.

'I might have shouted myself,' said Charles.

'Why,' said Richard, 'they would have liked that better. It would have been a great game for them. They probably expected it of you.'

'If I had shouted,' said Charles, 'my shout would have either killed them outright or sent them mad. Probably it would have killed them, for they were standing close.'

Richard smiled a little foolishly. He did not know whether or not he was expected to laugh, for Charles spoke so gravely and carefully. So he said: 'Indeed, what sort of shout would that be? Let me hear you shout.'

'It is not only children who would be hurt by my shout,' Charles said. 'Men can be sent raving mad by it; the strongest, even, would be flung to the ground It is a magic shout that I learned from the chief devil of the Northern Territory. I took eighteen years to perfect it, and yet I have used it, in all, no more than five times.'

Richard was so confused in his mind with the dream and the handkerchief and the word spoken to Elsie that he did not know what to say, so he muttered: 'I'll give you fifty pounds now to clear the cromlechs with a shout.'

'I see that you do not believe me,' Charles said. 'Perhaps you have never before heard of the terror shout?'

Richard considered and said: 'Well, I have read of the hero shout which the ancient Irish warriors used, that would drive armies backwards; and did not Hector, the Trojan, have a terrible shout? And there were sudden shouts in the woods of Greece. They were ascribed to the god Pan and would infect men with a

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madness of fear; from this legend indeed the word "panic" has come into the English language. And I remember another shout in the *Mabinogion*, in the story of Lludd and Llevelys. It was a shriek that was heard on every May Eve and went through all hearts and so scared them that the men lost their hue and their strength and the women their children, and the youths and maidens their senses, and the animals and trees, the earth and the waters were left barren. But it was caused by a dragon.'

'It must have been a British magician of the dragon clan,' said Charles. 'I belonged to the Kangaroos. Yes, that tallies. The effect is not exactly given, but near enough."

They reached the house at one o'clock, and Rachel was at the door, the dinner ready. 'Rachel,' said Richard, 'here is Mr. Charles to dinner; Mr. Charles is a great traveller.'

Rachel passed her hand over her eyes as if to dispel a cloud, but it may have been the sudden sunlight. Charles took her hand and kissed it, which surprised her. Rachel was graceful, small, with eyes unusually blue for the blackness of her hair, delicate in her movements, and with a voice rather low-pitched; she had a freakish sense of humour.

('You would like Rachel,' said Crossley, 'she visits me here sometimes.')

Of Charles it would be difficult to say one thing or another: he was of middle age, and tall; his hair grey; his face never still for a moment; his eyes large and bright, sometimes yellow, sometimes brown, sometimes grey; his voice changed its tone and accent with the subject; his hands were brown and hairy at the back, his nails well cared for. Of Richard it is enough to say that he was a musician, not a strong man but a lucky one. Luck was his strength.

After dinner Charles and Richard washed the dishes together, and Richard suddenly asked Charles if he would let him hear the shout: for he thought that he could not have peace of mind until he had heard it. So horrible a thing was, surely, worse to think about than to hear: for now he believed in the shout.

Charles stopped washing up; mop in hand. 'As you wish,' said he, 'but I have warned you what a shout it is. And if I shout it must be in a lonely place where nobody else can hear; and I shall not shout in the second degree, the degree which kills certainly, but in the first, which terrifies only, and when you want me to stop put your hands to your ears."

'Agreed,' said Richard.

'I have never yet shouted to satisfy an idle curiosity,' said Charles, 'but only when in danger

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of my life from enemies, black or white, and once when I was alone in the desert without food or drink. Then I was forced to shout, for food.'

Richard thought: 'Well, at least I am a lucky man, and my luck will be good enough even for this.'

'I am not afraid,' he told Charles.

'We will walk out on the sand hills tomorrow early,' Charles said, 'when nobody is stirring; and I will shout. You say you are not afraid.'

But Richard was very much afraid, and what made his fear worse was that somehow he could not talk to Rachel and tell her of it: he knew that if he told her she would either forbid him to go or she would come with him. If she forbade him to go, the fear of the shout and the sense of cowardice would hang over him ever afterwards; but if she came with him, either the shout would be nothing and she would have a new taunt for his credulity and Charles would laugh with her, or if it were something she might well be driven mad. So he said nothing.

Charles was invited to sleep at the cottage for the night, and they stayed up late talking.

Rachel told Richard when they were in bed that she liked Charles and that he certainly was a man who had seen many things, though a fool and a big baby. Then Rachel talked a great deal of nonsense, for she had had two glasses of wine which she seldom drank, and she said: 'Oh, my dearest, I forgot to tell you. When I put on my buckled shoes this morning while you were away I found a buckle missing. I must have noticed that it was lost before I went to sleep last night and yet not fixed the loss firmly in my mind, so that it came out as a discovery in my dream; but I have a feeling, in fact I am sure that he is the man whom we met in our dream. But I don't care, not I.'

Richard grew more and more afraid, and he dared not tell of the black silk handkerchief, or of Charles' invitations to him to walk in the sand hills. And what was worse, Charles had used only a white handkerchief while he was in the house, so that he could not be sure whether he had seen it after all. Turning his head away, he said lamely: 'Well, Charles knows a lot of things. I am going for a walk with him early tomorrow if you don't mind; an early walk is what I need.'

'Oh, I'll come too,' she said.

Richard could not think how to refuse her; he knew that he had made a mistake in telling her of the walk. But he said: 'Charles will be very glad. At six o'clock then.'

At six o'clock he got up, but Rachel after the wine was too sleepy to come with them. She

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kissed him goodbye and off he went with Charles.

Richard had had a bad night. In his dreams nothing was in human terms, but confused and fearful, and he had felt himself more distant from Rachel than he had ever felt since their marriage, and the fear of the shout was gnawing at him. He was also hungry and cold. There was a stiff wind blowing towards the sea from the mountains and a few splashes of rain. Charles spoke hardly a word, but chewed a stalk of grass and walked fast.

Richard felt giddy, and said to Charles: 'Wait a moment, I have a stitch in my side.' So they stopped, and Richard asked, gasping: 'What sort of shout is it? Is it loud, or shrill? How is it produced? How can it madden a man?'

Charles was silent, so Richard went on with a foolish smile: 'Sound, though, is a curious thing. I remember once, when I was at Cambridge, that a King's College man had his turn of reading the evening lesson. He had not spoken ten words before there was a groaning and ringing and creaking, and pieces of wood and dust fell from the roof; for his voice was exactly attuned to that of the building, so that he had to stop, else the roof might have fallen; as you can break a wine glass, by playing its note on a violin.'

Charles consented to answer: 'My shout is not a matter of tone or vibration but something not to be explained. It is a shout of pure evil, and there is no fixed place for it on the scale. It may take any note. It is pure terror, and if it were not for a certain intention of mine, which I need not tell you, I would not shout for you.'

Richard had a great gift of fear, and this new account of the shout disturbed him more and more; he wished himself at home in bed, and Charles two continents away. But he was fascinated. They were crossing the links now and going through the bent grass that pricked through his stockings and soaked them.

Now they were on the bare sand hills. From the highest of them Charles looked about him; he could see the beach stretched out for two miles and more. There was no one in sight. Then Richard saw Charles take something out of his pocket and begin carelessly to juggle it on his finger tip and spinning it up with finger and thumb to catch it on the back of his hand. It was Rachel's buckle.

Richard's breath came in gasps, his heart beat violently and he nearly vomited. He was shivering with cold, and yet sweating. Soon they came to an open place among the sand hills near the sea. There was a raised bank with sea holly growing on it and a little sickly grass; stones were strewn all around, brought there, it seemed,

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by the sea years before. Though the place was behind the first rampart of sand hills, there was a gap in the line through which a high tide might have broken, and the winds that continually swept through the gap kept them uncovered of sand. Richard had his hands in his trouser pockets for warmth and was nervously twisting a soft piece of wax around his right forefinger—a candle end that was in his pocket from the night before when he had gone downstairs to lock the door.

'Are you ready?' asked Charles.

Richard nodded.

A gull dipped over the crest of the sand hills and rose again screaming when it saw them. 'Stand by the sea holly,' said Richard, with a dry mouth, 'and I'll be here among the stones, not too near. When I raise my hand, shout! When I put my fingers to my ears, stop at once.'

So Charles walked twenty steps towards the holly. Richard saw his broad back and the black silk handkerchief sticking from his pocket. He remembered the dream, and the shoe buckle and Elsie's fear. His resolution broke: he hurriedly pulled the piece of wax in two, and sealed his ears. Charles did not see him.

He turned, and Richard gave the signal with his hand.

Charles leaned forward oddly, his chin thrust out, his teeth bared, and never before had Richard seen such a look of fear on a man's face. He had not been prepared for that. Charles' face, that was usually soft and changing, uncertain as a cloud, now hardened to a rough stone mask, dead white at first, and then flushing outwards from the cheek bones red and redder, and at last as black, as if he were about to choke. His mouth then slowly opened to the full, and Richard fell on his face, his hands to his ears, in a faint.

When he came to himself he was lying alone among the stones. He sat up, wondering numbly whether he had been there long. He felt very weak and sick, with a chill on his heart that was worse than the chill of his body. He could not think. He put his hand down to lift himself up and it rested on a stone, a larger one than most of the others. He picked it up and felt its surface, absently. His mind wandered. He began to think about shoemaking, a trade of which he had known nothing, but now every trick was familiar to him. 'I must be a shoemaker,' he said aloud.

Then he corrected himself: 'No, I am a musician. Am I going mad?' He threw the stone from him; it struck against another and bounced off.

He asked himself: 'Now why did I say that I was a shoemaker? It seemed a moment ago that I knew all there was to be known about shoemaking and now I know

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nothing at all about it. I must get home to Rachel. Why did I ever come out?'

Then he saw Charles on a sand hill a hundred yards away, gazing out to sea. He remembered his fear and made sure that the wax was in his ears: he stumbled to his feet. He saw a flurry on the sand and there was a rabbit lying on its side, twitching in a convulsion. As Richard moved towards it, the flurry ended: the rabbit was dead. Richard crept behind a sand hill out of Charles' sight and then struck homeward, running awkwardly in the soft sand. He had not gone twenty paces before he came upon the gull. It was standing stupidly on the sand and did not rise at his approach, but fell over dead.

How Richard reached home he did not know, but there he was opening the back door and crawling upstairs on his hands and knees. He unsealed his ears.

Rachel was sitting up in bed, pale and trembling. 'Thank God you're back,' she said; 'I have had a nightmare, the worst of all my life. It was frightful. I was in my dream, in the deepest dream of all, like the one of which I told you. I was like a stone, and I was aware of you near me; you were you, quite plain, though I was a stone, and you were in great fear and I could do nothing to help you, and you were waiting for something and the terrible thing did not happen to you, but it happened to me. I can't tell you what it was, but it was as though all my nerves cried out in pain at once, and I was pierced through and through with a beam of some intense evil light and twisted inside out. I woke up and my heart was beating so fast that I had to gasp for breath. Do you think I had a heart attack and my heart missed a beat? They say it feels like that. Where have you been, dearest? Where is Mr. Charles?'

Richard sat on the bed and held her hand. 'I have had a bad experience too,' he said. 'I was out with Charles by the sea and as he went ahead to climb on the highest sand hill I felt very faint and fell down among a patch of stones, and when I came to myself I was in a desperate sweat of fear and had to hurry home. So I came back running alone. It happened perhaps half an hour ago,' he said.

He did not tell her more. He asked, could he come back to bed and would she get breakfast? That was a thing she had not done all the years they were married.

'I am as ill as you,' said she. It was understood between them always that when Rachel was ill, Richard must be well.

'You are not,' said he, and fainted again.

She helped him to bed ungraciously and dressed herself and went slowly downstairs. A smell of coffee and bacon rose to meet her

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and there was Charles, who had lit the fire, putting two breakfasts on a tray. She was so relieved at not having to get breakfast and so confused by her experience that she thanked him and called him a darling, and he kissed her hand gravely and pressed it. He had made the breakfast exactly to her liking: the coffee was strong and the eggs fried on both sides.

Rachel fell in love with Charles. She had often fallen in love with men before and since her marriage, but it was her habit to tell Richard when this happened, as he agreed to tell her when it happened to him: so that the suffocation of passion was given a vent and there was no jealousy, for she used to say (and he had the liberty of saying): 'Yes, I am in *love* with so-and-so, but I only *love* you.'

That was as far as it had ever gone. But this was different. Somehow, she did not know why, she could not own to being in love with Charles: for she no longer loved Richard. She hated him for being ill, and said that he was lazy, and a sham. So about noon he got up, but went groaning around the bedroom until she sent him back to bed to groan.

Charles helped her with the housework, doing all the cooking, but he did not go up to see Richard, since he had not been asked to do so. Rachel was ashamed, and apologized to Charles for Richard's rudeness in running away from him. But Charles said mildly that he took it as no insult; he had felt queer himself that morning; it was as though something evil was astir in the air as they reached the sand hills. She told him that she too had had the same queer feeling.

Later she found all Lampton talking of it. The doctor maintained that it was an earth tremor, but the country people said that it had been the Devil passing by. He had come to fetch the black soul of Solomon Jones, the gamekeeper, found dead that morning in his cottage by the sand hills.

When Richard could go downstairs and walk about a little without groaning, Rachel sent him to the cobbler's to get a new buckle for her shoe. She came with him to the bottom of the garden. The path ran beside a steep bank. Richard looked ill and groaned slightly as he walked, so Rachel, half in anger, half in fun, pushed him down the bank, where he fell sprawling among the nettles and old iron. Then she ran back into the house laughing loudly.

Richard sighed, tried to share the joke against himself with Rachel—but she had gone—heaved himself up, picked the shoes from among the nettles, and after awhile walked slowly up the bank, out of the gate, and down the lane in the unaccustomed glare of the sun.

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When he reached the cobbler's he sat down heavily. The cobbler was glad to talk to him. 'You are looking bad,' said the cobbler.

Richard said: 'Yes, on Friday morning I had a bit of a turn; I am only now recovering from it.'

'Good God,' burst out the cobbler, 'if you had a bit of a turn, what did I not have? It was as if someone handled me raw, without my skin. It was as if someone seized my very soul and juggled with it, as you might juggle with a stone, and hurled me away. I shall never forget last Friday morning.'

A strange notion came to Richard that it was the cobbler's soul which he had handled in the form of a stone. 'It may be,' he thought, 'that the souls of every man and woman and child in Lampton are lying there.' But he said nothing about this, asked for a buckle, and went home.

Rachel was ready with a kiss and a joke; he might have kept silent, for his silence always made Rachel ashamed. 'But,' he thought, 'why make her ashamed? From shame she goes to self-justification and picks a quarrel over something else and it's ten times worse. I'll be cheerful and accept the joke.'

He was unhappy. And Charles was established in the house: gentle-voiced, hard-working, and continually taking Richard's part against Rachel's scoffing. This was galling, because Rachel did not resent it.

('The next part of the story,' said Crossley, 'is the comic relief, an account of how Richard went again to the sand hills, to the heap of stones, and identified the souls of the doctor and rector—the doctor's because it was shaped like a whiskey bottle and the rector's because it was as black as original sin—and how he proved to himself that the notion was not fanciful. But I will skip that and come to the point where Rachel two days later suddenly became affectionate and loved Richard she said, more than ever before.')

The reason was that Charles had gone away, nobody knows where, and had relaxed the buckle magic for the time, because he was confident that he could renew it on his return. So in a day or two Richard was well again and everything was as it had been, until one afternoon the door opened, and there stood Charles.

He entered without a word of greeting and hung his hat upon a peg. He sat down by the fire and asked: 'When is supper ready?'

Richard looked at Rachel, his eyebrows raised, but Rachel seemed fascinated by the man.

She answered: 'Eight o'clock,' in her low voice; and stooping down, drew off Charles' muddy boots and found him a pair of Richard's slippers.

Charles said: 'Good. It is now

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seven o'clock. In another hour, supper. At nine o'clock the boy will bring the evening paper. At ten o'clock, Rachel, you and I sleep together.'

Richard thought that Charles must have gone suddenly mad. But Rachel answered quietly: 'Why, of course, my dear.' Then she turned viciously to Richard: 'And you run away, little man!' she said, and slapped his cheek with all her strength.

Richard stood puzzled, nursing his cheek. Since he could not believe that Rachel and Charles had both gone mad together, he must be mad himself. At all events, Rachel knew her mind, and they had a secret compact that if either of them ever wished to break the marriage promise, the other should not stand in the way. They had made this compact because they wished to feel themselves bound by love rather than by ceremony. So he said as calmly as he could: 'Very well, Rachel. I shall leave you two together.'

Charles flung a boot at him, saying: 'If you put your nose inside the door between now and breakfast time, I'll shout the ears off your head.'

Richard went out this time not afraid, but cold inside and quite clear-headed. He went through the gate, down the lane, and across the links. It wanted three hours yet until sunset. He joked with the boys playing stump cricket on the school field. He skipped stones. He thought of Rachel and tears started to his eyes. Then he sang to comfort himself. 'Oh, I'm certainly mad,' he said, 'and what in the world has happened to my luck?'

At last he came to the stones. 'Now,' he said, 'I shall find my soul in this heap and I shall crack it into a hundred pieces with this hammer'—he had picked up the hammer in the coal shed as he came out.

Then he began looking for his soul. Now, one may recognize the soul of another man or woman, but one can never recognize one's own. Richard could not find his. But by chance he came upon Rachel's soul and recognized it (a slim green stone with glints of quartz in it) because she was estranged from him at the time. Against it lay another stone, an ugly misshapen flint of a mottled brown. He swore: 'I'll destroy this. It must be the soul of Charles.'

He kissed the soul of Rachel; it was like kissing her lips. Then he took the soul of Charles and poised his hammer. 'I'll knock you into fifty fragments!'

He paused. Richard had scruples. He knew that Rachel loved Charles better than himself, and he was bound to respect the compact. A third stone (his own, it must be) was lying the other side of Charles' stone; it was of smooth grey granite, about the size of a

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cricket ball. He said to himself: 'I will break my own soul in pieces and that will be the end of me.' The world grew black, his eyes ceased to focus, and he all but fainted. But he recovered himself, and with a great cry brought down the coal hammer, crack, and crack again, on the grey stone.

It split in four pieces, exuding a smell like gunpowder: and when Richard found that he was still alive and whole, he began to laugh and laugh. Oh, he was mad, quite mad! He flung the hammer away, lay down exhausted, and fell asleep.

He awoke as the sun was just setting. He went home in confusion, thinking: 'This is a very bad dream and Rachel will help me out of it.'

When he came to the edge of the town he found a group of men talking excitedly under a lamp-post. One said: 'About eight o'clock it happened, didn't it?' The other said: 'Yes.' A third said: 'Ay, mad as a hatter. "Touch me," he says, "and I'll shout. I'll shout you into a fit, the whole blasted police force of you. I'll shout you mad." And the inspector says: "Now, Crossley, put your hands up, we've got you cornered at last." "One last chance," says he. "Go and leave me or I'll shout you stiff and dead."'

Richard had stopped to listen. 'And what happened to Crossley then?' he said. 'And what did the woman say?'

'"For Christ's sake," she said to the inspector, "go away or he'll kill you."'

'And did he shout?'

'He didn't shout. He screwed up his face for a moment and drew in his breath. A'mighty, I've never seen such a ghastly looking face in my life. I had to take three or four brandies afterwards. And the inspector he drops the revolver and it goes off; but nobody hit. Then suddenly a change comes over this man Crossley. He claps his hands to his side and again to his heart, and his face goes smooth and dead again. Then he begins to laugh and dance and cut capers. And the woman stares and can't believe her eyes and the police lead him off. If he was mad before, he was just harmless dotty now; and they had no trouble with him. He's been taken off in the ambulance to the Royal West County Asylum.'

So Richard went home to Rachel and told her everything and she told him everything, though there was not much to tell. She had not fallen in love with Charles, she said; she was only teasing Richard and she had never said anything or heard Charles say anything in the least like what he told her; it was part of his dream. She loved him always and only him, for all his faults; which she went through—his stinginess, his

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talkativeness, his untidiness. Charles and she had eaten a quiet supper, and she did think it had been bad of Richard to rush off without a word of explanation and stay away for three hours like that. Charles might have murdered her. He did start pulling her about a bit, in fun, wanting her to dance with him, and then the knock came on the door, and the inspector shouted: 'Walter Charles Crossley, in the name of the King, I arrest you for the murder of George Grant, Harry Grant, and Ada Coleman at Sydney, Australia.' Then Charles had gone absolutely mad. He had pulled out a shoe buckle and said to it: 'Hold her for me.' And then he had told the police to go away or he'd shout them dead. After that he made a dreadful face at them and went to pieces altogether. 'He was rather a nice man; I liked his face so much and feel so sorry for him.'

'Did you like that story?' asked Crossley.

'Yes,' said I, busy scoring, 'a Milesian tale of the best. Lucius Apuleius, I congratulate you.'

Crossley turned to me with a troubled face and hands clenched trembling. 'Every word of it is true,' he said. 'Crossley's soul was cracked in four pieces and I'm a madman. Oh, I don't blame Richard and Rachel. They are a pleasant, loving pair of fools and I've never wished them harm; they often visit me here. In any case, now that my soul lies broken in pieces, my powers are gone. Only one thing remains to me,' he said, 'and that is the shout.'

I had been so busy scoring and listening to the story at the same time that I had not noticed the immense bank of black cloud that swam up until it spread across the sun and darkened the whole sky. Warm drops of rain fell: a flash of lightning dazzled us and with it came a smashing clap of thunder.

In a moment all was confusion. Down came a drenching rain, the cricketers dashed for cover, the lunatics began to scream, bellow, and fight. One tall young man, the same B. C. Brown who had once played for Hants, pulled all his clothes off and ran about stark naked. Outside the scoring box an old man with a beard began to pray to the thunder: 'Bah! Bah! Bah!'

Crossley's eyes twitched proudly. 'Yes,' said he, pointing to the sky, 'that's the sort of shout it is; that's the effect it has; but I can do better than that.' Then his face fell suddenly and became childishly unhappy and anxious. 'Oh dear God,' he said, 'he'll shout at me again, Crossley will. He'll freeze my marrow.'

The rain was rattling on the tin roof so that I could hardly hear him. Another flash, another clap of thunder even louder than the first. 'But that's only the second

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degree,' he shouted in my ear; 'it's the first that kills.'

'Oh,' he said. 'Don't you understand?' He smiled foolishly. 'I'm Richard now, and Crossley will kill me.'

The naked man was running about brandishing a cricket stump in either hand and screaming: an ugly sight. 'Bah! Bah! Bah!' prayed the old man, the rain spouting down his back from his uptilted hat.

'Nonsense,' said I, 'be a man, remember you're Crossley. You're a match for a dozen Richards. You played a game and lost, because Richard had the luck; but you still have the shout.'

I was feeling rather mad myself. Then the Asylum doctor rushed into the scoring box, his flannels streaming wet, still wearing pads and batting gloves, his glasses gone; he had heard our voices raised, and tore Crossley's hands from mine. 'To your dormitory at once, Crossley!' he ordered.

'I'll not go,' said Crossley, proud again, 'you miserable Snake and Apple Pie Man!'

The doctor seized him by his coat and tried to hustle him out.

Crossley flung him off, his eyes blazing with madness. 'Get out,' he said, 'and leave me alone here or I'll shout. Do you hear? I'll shout. I'll kill the whole damn lot of you. I'll shout the Asylum down. I'll wither the grass. I'll shout.' His face was distorted in terror. A red spot appeared on either cheek.

I put my fingers to my ears and ran out of the scoring box. I had run perhaps twenty yards, when an indescribable pang of fire spun me about and left me dazed and numbed. I escaped death somehow; I suppose that I am lucky, like the Richard of the story. But the lightning struck Crossley and the doctor dead.

Crossley's body was found rigid; the doctor's was crouched in a corner, his hands to his ears. Nobody could understand this because death had been instantaneous, and the doctor was not a man to stop his ears against thunder.

It makes a rather unsatisfactory end to the story to say that Rachel and Richard were the friends with whom I was staying—Crossley had described them most accurately—but that when I told them that a man called Charles Crossley had been struck at the same time as their friend the doctor, they seemed to take Crossley's death casually by comparison with his. Richard looked blank; Rachel said: 'Crossley? I think that was the man who called himself the Australian Illusionist and gave that wonderful conjuring show the other day. He had practically no apparatus but a black silk handkerchief. I liked his face so much. But Richard didn't like it at all.'

'No, I couldn't stand the way he looked at you all the time,' Richard said.

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*Earth was dead, and round the decay of that colossal wreck gathered the archaeologists of the far future. What could they find more enduring than a statue or an inscription?*

# First Dig

## *by Miriam Allen deFord*

THE DAY BEFORE THE FUNERAL, THE family, what was left of it, had gathered in New Place—all but old Anne; particularly feeble, she was sleeping in the second-best bed he had left her. Susanna was there, and her husband Hall the physician, and their little daughter. Judith had brought her new husband Thomas Quiney, and they were not pleased, as her father had not been. His sister, the newly widowed Mrs. Hart, was there with her three sons. She it was who had protested against the inscription on the tombstone.

"People will say he himself wrote it," she complained, "and it is a poor awkward thing."

"Nay, aunt," Susanna told her. "It must be as he asked. He is not to be buried in the churchyard with our grandparents, but in the church itself, before the altar, within the chancel rail. He has the right, as part owner of the village tithes. But we know well that would not protect him—nor the memory of the glory he has brought to this town, either—when the time came for some other tithe-owner to claim the honor of burial in that place. Then they would shovel his poor bones out into the charnel-house in the churchyard. He dreaded that, and it is for that reason that he commanded those words to be carved on the flagstone above his grave."

And so he was laid in his wooden coffin in the ground, with no vault, beneath the stone with its inscription; and none dared disobey the exhortation on it. And the years passed, and the centuries, and the millennia, and still he lay undisturbed. . . .

During the long vacation, whenever the planetary opposition was favorable, the archaeological department of the Central University took a group of students to the Old Planet for a two-week course in the technique of practical excavation. After 50,000 years the air was safe and breathable, though with a quality tense and bitter to the young people accustomed to the mechanically cleaned and



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warmed air of their home planets. But the field expeditions were popular, and there was always a waiting-list.

This time Roland was the youngest of the group; others had made the trip before, but this would be his first dig. He was excited, full of romantic imaginings. The briefing session as soon as they landed was meant to take the nonsense out of young dreamers, but it did not succeed with Roland.

"Naturally," said Kan, the teaching assistant who was in charge, "you understand that the sites allocated to students are not those where important finds may be expected. The whole desert planet is in a sense one huge archaeological site, and of course anyone might find anything anywhere. But what you must expect is something quite humble—a kitchen midden, a heap of barren rubble that once was a minor public building, an insignificant village. This time we are to dig in what was apparently, for our remote ancestors in prehistory, a rural district far removed from such civilized centers as the inhabitants possessed."

"Just where on the Old Planet are we?" a student of palaeogeography wanted to know.

"I can tell you the longitude and latitude, but we have given no names to the various locations, and of course we have no idea what the people who lived in them called them. All I can say is that when there were oceans here, this must have been an island. Our exact position on the planet doesn't matter, except that it is far away from the poles, which seem always to have been uninhabited. What we're here for, as you know, is to learn the methods by which scientific digging is done. You'll have far more use for picks and knives and brushes and your own fingers than for any theoretical knowledge; that will come later, when we start classifying our finds—if we make any."

But even such dry injunctions were unable to discourage Roland. He received his allotment of space —some four by eight feet in a dreary waste of tumbled stone— with shining eyes, as if in his heart he knew something wonderful and thrilling must be waiting for him, and for him alone, beneath the blasted crust.

At the end of a hard day's labor with no appreciable results whatever—for of course no solvents or explosives could be used in this slow, patient, careful, primitive procedure—he alone still felt fresh enthusiasm. Kan watched him with a quizzical smile. But the smile was hopeful too; he had had his eye on Roland from the beginning. Perhaps once or twice in his career, a teacher discovers among cheerful mediocrities a born and dedicated scholar. Kan had faith that young Roland, once he had shed his juvenile thrill-seeking,

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had the makings of such a one.

It was only on the third day that one of the more experienced students made the first find—part of a human jaw. Others followed fast, until it became evident that they were in luck—the site, chosen for them at random, must once have been in part a cemetery, in part the ruins of an adjacent and perhaps related building. But Kan disparaged the finds.

"Nothing worth keeping," he ruled. "We have any amount of remains of this type already. We'll leave them here when we go."

So it was rather timidly, though exultantly, that Roland called to him late that afternoon.

"L-look," he stammered in his excitement. "There were no bones here—if there ever were any they must have coalesced long ago with the earth. But under the rubble I found this—it was broken across the middle but the crack fits perfectly."

At the side of the open excavation he had laid the stone slab, the two pieces carefully fitted together.

"It's simply covered with markings, Kan!"

"So I see." The teacher hesitated. Would it be wise to snub the boy too much? Still, it would do him no good to give him false ideas which he might find it hard to overcome.

"That's far from unique, you know, Roland," he said gently. "Our museums are running over with inscribed stone and metal. We know that most of the inhabitants of the Old Planet did have a written language—or many languages, for all that we can tell. But the trouble is, they are all entirely indecipherable, and probably always will be."

Roland looked at him aghast.

"Do you mean, with all our advanced technology, we can't read what they wrote?"

"I'm afraid not. You see, we have no clue whatever. If we had somewhere an inscription in parallel languages, and knew one of them, of course we could read the other. Or if we had even some inscription we could relate to known facts—a map, an astronomical chart—we might manage. But unfortunately they seem never to have inscribed such things on metal or stone, and their more perishable materials, whatever they were, have long since crumbled into dust. If the whole planet hadn't been blasted, some such things might have been preserved in dry caves or under deserts, even after 50,000 years. . . . No matter how advanced our own science, Roland, it is impossible to decipher an unknown language written in an unknown script, especially when we haven't even proper names to go by."

Kan glanced at the boy's downcast face, and added hastily: "But if you want to keep this as a sou-

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venir of your first dig, I don't think there would be any objection. We've allowed weight for any possible finds of value."

Roland said slowly: "This—this must have been a marker on a grave. Wouldn't it have some important significance? Perhaps it would tell us about their religion."

"We don't even know if they had one. This could simply be a statement of the name and dates of the person buried here. We have thousands and thousands of similar gravestones in our museums. And is it likely that this one, from a rural district in an isolated corner of the planet, would be of the slightest importance?"

"But I had such a strong feeling—"

The teacher gazed at him keenly.

"Have you extra-sensory perception, Roland?" he asked.

"No, I haven't—at least that's what they said when I was examined in lower school. But my mother had, and sometimes I've felt I must have inherited just a little of it. I have such strong premonitions sometimes. Before I even touched this digging I felt there was a—a message here for me.

"And when I started to handle those broken pieces of stone—You'll think I'm crazy. But I felt I'd committed a crime—I felt guilty—

"It's as if I had disobeyed something—somebody from that remote past—some mighty spirit that will never die; as if I had disobeyed him and now I must be punished for it."

Kan stared at the boy in perplexity, wondering how to deal with him. Some of the others had stopped work and gathered around him, curious to see what was happening. "Has Roland found something valuable?" asked the girl who had been digging nearest to them.

"Nothing at all—we're talking about something else altogether," the teacher said brusquely. He dismissed them with a wave of the hand, and they turned back reluctantly to their own work. Roland was pale and trembling, his expression a mixture of shame and determination.

"I suppose you think I'm out of my mind," he said defensively to his teacher.

"No, I don't," Kan answered quietly. "Whether you are wrong or right in your feeling doesn't matter. What matters is that you should feel right within yourself. Perhaps you weren't meant to be an archaeologist, after all."

"Oh, but I am! Nothing has ever meant so much to me. It's just—this single find—"

"Put the stone back where you found it, Roland. I'll find another place for you to dig."

The boy began to shake uncontrollably.

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"It's too late," he muttered. "I've committed the sin already."

"Put that stone back, and come away."

As if he had not heard, Roland reached into his kit and brought out a rolled piece of plastic and a marking-pen. He crouched on the ground beside the broken flagstone.

"I must copy the inscription first," he whispered. "I *must*."

Kan put out a hand to stop him, then withdrew it halfway. Let him work out the compulsion. Perhaps it would act as a catharsis. Later, when Roland was calm again, they would talk about it and the teacher might find some way to avoid the destruction of so promising a career.

Unable to tear himself away, he stood watching Roland as laboriously he copied the senseless markings.

With the last letter, Roland looked up at him.

"It's finished," he said hoarsely, and thrust it into Kan's hand. "Keep it." The look in his eyes made Kan shudder.

"Oh, no!" Roland cried sharply. "I didn't mean to—"

Suddenly he slumped face downward on the open grave. Kan bent quietly and felt for his heart. It had stopped beating.

When the expedition returned, before its time because of the unexpected tragedy, an official inquiry determined that Roland's heart had not been equal to the over-exertion of digging. The University authorities were reprimanded for carelessness in certifying him as physically fit. Kan was absolved of all blame for his death.

But he blamed himself bitterly. He kept the sheet of plastic with him, though neither he nor anyone else would ever know what those strange words meant. He could never bring himself to destroy it, or to show it to any other person. Sometimes he stared at it for long ruminative sessions, as if willing himself to force its secret from it, but in vain. He grew so familiar with it that he knew by heart the shape of every marking.

Roland had died because he believed that human genius has everlasting power, even when the name of the man who possessed it and of the very land which gave him birth have both been obliterated from the memory of mankind—that some supreme genius of the prehistoric past had reached out through 50 millennia to strike down the vandal who had desecrated his last resting-place. He had believed those crooked marks had conveyed the warning.

In soberer moments Kan told himself not to be a fool. The boy, despite his talent, had been a complete neurotic; he had died of his neurosis and the physical exhaustion it had induced. To share

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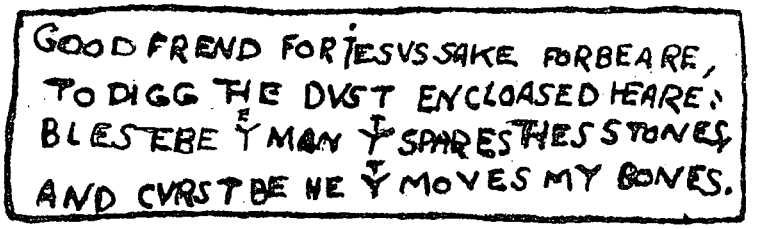
in an atavistic yielding to such gross superstition was unworthy of the scientific position he himself had, with the years and hard work, attained.

But all his life that inscription haunted him. Sometimes at night when he could not sleep he could see it in his mind's eye before him, with all its maddening mystery:


GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE,
TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOASED HEARE:
BLESTE BE Y MAN Y SPARES THES STONES
AND CVRST BE HE Y MOVES MY BONES.

Note: *The above is a tracing of the actual inscription on Shakespeare's grave.*

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## *Through Time And Space With Ferdinand Feghoot: XIV*

Ferdinand Feghoot was a close friend of the Very Reverend William Ralph Inge. His time shuttle was installed in a back bedroom of St. Paul's Deanery, and the Gloomy Dean knew perfectly well that he came from the future. (Indeed, his tale of coming events was largely responsible for the nickname.)

"My boy," the Dean said one day, "couldn't we take a jaunt in your time machine? I'd like to talk with John Donne, the great poet. He was Dean of St. Paul's too, you know."

Feghoot acceeded. He rented Dean Inge an appropriate costume and took him back to 1624, where, after explaining the situation to Donne, who was vastly amused, he left them alone for a full day of discussion. The effect on Donne became obvious only a week later.

"ffeɾdinand ffeghoote," demanded King James I, "what's awry? There's not a merry word from Iohn Donne. Last night he read a Deuotion full only of funerals and dèath. He said, *Never send to ask for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.* Aye, as gloomy as that! What makes him take such a subject?"

"Your Majesty," said Ferdinand Feghoot, "you know how these great poets are—give 'em an Inge and they take a knell."

—Grendel Briarton

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# BOOKS

## *Wine with Your Bottle, Sir?*

**by Damon Knight**

Back in the dear dead days of the science fiction boom, four or five years ago particularly, it seemed to me there were signs of a new and better kind of science fiction novel coming along. After a preliminary spate of juvenile adventure stories and musty reprints, we began to get such admirable things as Kurt Vonnegut's PLAYER PIANO and Bernard Wolfe's LIMBO. And there were stirrings of promise in other books, such as THE LONG TOMORROW, by Leigh Brackett, and Margot Bennett's THE LONG WAY BACK. The field was beginning to interest capable writers of general fiction, and they brought a marked improvement in writing standards.

Well, the boom ended, the novels didn't sell as well as their authors and publishers had hoped; most of the newcomers (and some veterans) went elsewhere. The new and better s. f. novel never quite materialized.

But I still have hopes; every now and then, among the sludge, along comes a novel like John Bowen's AFTER THE RAIN (Ballantine, 35¢).

This literate, profound and funny story begins with a crackpot named Uppingham, who proposes to make rain by a kind of reverse electrolysis—i.e., by sticking the hydrogen and oxygen molecules back together in the atmosphere. When he actually tries this, using a balloon inflated with hydrogen, he blows himself to flinders.

Whereupon it begins to rain.

*Now Noahs began to proliferate in Britain. There was a Plymouth Noah, a Bradford Noah, and a mad old man who lived just outside Luton. (...) The Luton Noah was prosecuted for stealing sheep; the Plymouth Noah put out to sea, and was lost without trace; the*



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*Bradford Noah worked to the dimensions and materials laid down in the Bible, and never finished his ark for want of cypress.*

Meanwhile the narrator, John Clarke, an ex-reporter for a British imitation of *The New Yorker*, turns to writing flood-conscious ad copy. "One selling scheme of mine proposed that parasols turned upside down could be filled with food and towed behind boats in flooded areas, but it was rejected as far-fetched."

As the water keeps on rising, most of the arks founder, but Clarke and a girl named Sonya wind up on one that doesn't—a Kon-Tiki-style balsa raft, originally designed as a floating promotion stunt for Glub, the Ideal Breakfast Food: You Need No Other. The notion was for one Captain Hunter to drift around the Atlantic, subsisting on nothing but distilled sea water and "Glub Grits, Glub Cushions, Glub Toasties, Glub Flakes, Poppity Glub for the Little Ones, Glub Mash, and of course the new Glub in a Matchbox—a Week's Nourishment in Your Pants' Pocket."

Clarke and Sonya find seven people already on the raft: Hunter, "a shirt-off kind of man," who took the Glub position after failing an exam for pub-keeper; Harold Banner, a clergyman without a vocation; Gertrude Harrison, a gusher of helpfulness; Tony Ryle, the simple body-builder; Muriel Otterdale and her loony husband Wesley; and finally, Arthur Renshaw, the self-appointed leader.

Nearly all these people are marvelously real. They are unsuccessful, resigned, faintly comic people. The nearest thing to a hero among them is Arthur: a gray stick of a man, thin-lipped, thin-haired, eyes agleam with intelligence behind his spectacles, who insists on cold-water shaving and keeps the men sleeping dormitory style in one room, the women in another.

The rest of the book is a slow, dismally fascinating demonstration of how the others go on giving in to this prim fanatic, purely through laziness and lack of will, until they are in so deep there is no way out except by bloodshed. The paradox of Arthur is what gives the book its curious power: he is thoroughly awful, with the sort of gray, colorless awfulness that only a Briton could invent; and yet he is in fact the savior of the rest. Bowen makes it perfectly clear that without him, the others would have starved to death.

THE ENEMY STARS, by Poul Anderson (Lippincott, $2.95), is another recent book that gives me to hope, even if only marginally. The story, serialized in *Astounding* as "We Have Fed Our Sea," follows a familiar pattern: spacemen go

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out, wreck their ship, undergo prodigious hardships to repair it and get back to Earth.

Anderson's version is chiefly notable for its painstaking scientific background. Almost alone among active s. f. writers today, Anderson is a man with graduate training in science, and this novel, like some of the stories of James Blish and Hal Clement, fairly bristles with accurate and abstruse technical reasoning.

There are four in the *Southern Cross's* crew. David Ryerson is a father-tyrannized young commoner from the Outer Hebrides. Terangi Maclaren is a dilettante astronomer, a member of Earth's hereditary "technic" class. Seiichi Nakamura is a space pilot. The fourth man, Chang Sverdlov, is a member of a movement plotting rebellion against Earth. All four begin as stereotypes—the stammering young idealist, the arrogant rich man's son, the over-polite Oriental with an inferiority complex, and the violent, bullet-headed Slavic revolutionary. But Anderson's compassion and understanding make them come alive as individuals. Watching each one painfully learn to live with the imminence of death is a moving experience.

The story does not always break free of its pulp origins. Anderson's prose is sometimes graceless, occasionally drops into pulp jargon. But at his best he is poetically penetrating: in one swift image he can show you the heart of a character, or spread a landscpe before your eyes.

These two books are the products of utterly different traditions. Anderson's arises from THE SKYLARK OF SPACE, *Planet Stories*, and THE MOON IS HELL! Bowen's descends through Dickens, Huxley, Orwell and Waugh. The American pulp tradition is a tradition of form: a Western novelet, in the pulps' heyday, was as rigidly structured as a fugue. A writer in the pulp tradition takes his form whole, and embellishes it as best he can. This is what Anderson has done, and done superlatively.

The British tradition, on the other hand, is a tradition of content. Where Anderson's wit and understanding are bent out of shape to fit the iron skeleton of his plot, Bowen's story is as limp as an old sack. One is "chop it till it fits"; the other, "pour it in till it bulges."

Where these traditions meet, something new ought to take shape. Anderson's novel is satisfyingly rigid in structure, but it is brittle and artificial. Bowen's is deeply genuine and unforced, but while the raft drifts aimlessly, the story does too: and like the raft, it never seems to arrive at any particular destination.

Does it have to be one or the other?

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*Rosel George Brown is a New Orleans faculty wife, and the newest addition to F&SF's roster of writers-who-look-like-models. That she majored in Ancient Greek, and has a refreshingly uninhibited sense of humor is apparent in . . .*

# LOST IN TRANSLATION

## *by Rosel George Brown*

MERCEDES HAD PARTICULARLY PRESERVED her chastity, as her adenoids, out of intellectual conviction. The difference was that she *had* had an opportunity to be rid of her adenoids. There was nothing conventional about Mercedes, for that matter. When other girls were out experimenting with hasheesh, and swimming naked in mixed groups, Mercedes reclined neurasthenically on her violet plush sofa, reading the *Bifurcate Review*. In her adenoidal way, she was a Humanist, a Classicist, and a Graecophile (in translation, of course). As a further refinement, she read only Victorian translations from the Greek, a matter of keeping in step with the *avant-garde* neo-Victorian revival.

When the doorbell chimed "Home Sweet Home," Mercedes' heart fluttered ominously. She was, she thought palely, so very delicate. She passed a small bottle of sal volatile under her nose, and placed an embroidered bookmark between the pages of her Aristophanes before closing it reluctantly. Such delightful humor! The fact that she actually didn't get any of the jokes was of course because So Much Is Lost in Translation.

There was a discreet knock at the door and Thomas, in faultless butler's attire, walked in carrying a silver salver. Mercedes frowned at Thomas' creaking walk, conscious that she had been putting off the indelicate and really repulsive task of oiling him. Thomas, eyes shifting in embarrassment at his irrepressible squeaks, presented the salver on which rested, as usual, nothing.

"The *gentleman*," Thomas said with a rusty sniff, "said he had no card."

"A man?" Mercedes asked rhetorically. "Very well. I guess you may show him in." She moved to the red velvet, rose-carved chair where the tapestried bell-



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pull and a heavy bronze paperweight were near at hand.

Thomas opened the door to admit a fresh-faced young man that looked like one of her father's graduate students.

"My name is Kim," he said heartily, coming toward her with his hand extended. He stopped in midpassage and colored slightly as he looked around the room, and did a double-take on Mercedes' horn-rimmed glasses. He was dressed in the Ivy League loincloth and high boots, mementoes of a year at Harvard. He lowered his green bag to the floor and looked longingly at the enormous Chinese scarf which clothed the piano so modestly. He abandoned the idea, sank down in the Eastlake loveseat opposite Mercedes, and began to pluck nervously at the antimacassar.

"I have come to see you," he said in hushed tones, "about a matter of—er—extreme delicacy."

Mercedes clutched her sal volatile convulsively. "Yes, Mr. . . .?"

"Kim," he replied. "Oh, er, Mr. *Brian*. I have, of course, spoken to your father first."

Mercedes flushed violently. She moved nearer the bell-pull and began to toy with the paperweight. "Mr. Brian . . . sir . . ." she began haltingly. "I don't even know you. This matter of great delicacy—perhaps we had better speak of it at some more propitious moment. I am not too well, you know." Mercedes placed her hand on her fluttering heart.

Kim, who hadn't read a Victorian novel since English II, responded tactlessly. "You're healthy as a horse. I've just been over your medical."

His gross brutality shocked Mercedes out of her impending swoon. "What's this all about? What did you talk to my father about?" Had this coarse, working class type man gone over her medical report before . . . whatever he had in mind? She shuddered and calculated the thrust necessary to carry the paperweight from her hand to his head.

"I'm one of Jack's—ah—Mr. King's graduate students. We've been engaged in an experiment of great importance. It's so important, in fact, and so secret, that only two people in the world know about it—your father and myself. We have reached the stage now where we need a vic . . . ah . . . a volunteer to test our hypothesis."

"And you're asking me . . . my own father . . ." Mercedes covered her face with her hands, overcome by the Horror of the Situation. She felt exactly like—who was it? Oh, yes—Dr. Rappaccini's daughter. She could feel the Forces of Evil closing in around her.

Kim took out a cigarette irritably, looked hopelessly for an

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ash tray and replaced the cigarette in his green bag. He leaned forward, right elbow on one knee, and grinned at Mercedes in the powerful, masculine way most women found irresistible.

"Let me at least tell you what the experiment is. You can faint after I'm finished. We have, we think, perfected a time machine. It works by a method of "jump grooving" of instants, so that the subject is translated from one instant to another. In other words, if we send you back to, say, last Friday at three o'clock, the instant you arrive you create the existence you have come to observe, just as it actually was. It's not in reality, if I may use the term, the same, but it's *exactly* alike. Only, so to speak, in another groove. Except for the paradox. You wouldn't meet yourself, because you aren't there until you are translated there and create the moment."

But Mercedes wasn't listening. Her head was thrown back, waiting for the guillotine to fall.

"Well, never mind the theory then. The point is, the machine is all built and we need someone to test it."

"I understand," Mercedes quivered. "It's dangerous. No one would *willingly* risk their neck . . ."

"No, no. Not at all dangerous. Whether it works or not the machine itself is perfectly safe."

"Then why me? Why not you? Or father? Or anyone at all except me?"

"For a very good reason. The machine requires three people, two to work it from this end, and the subject who travels. No one can work it but Jack and me. Anyone, of course, could be the traveler, but we're afraid to get anyone else in on it. You were entirely Jack's idea. It would keep the experiment in the family."

Mercedes glowered at him and reached for the bell pull. "I *won't* go."

"Wait!" Kim caught her hand. He gazed into her eyes with all the sincerity of three summers with the Little Theatre. "You're a terribly attractive woman, you know."

Mercedes let her hand fall. There was a certain brute honesty about the man.

Kim lit a cigarette and threw the match into the rose-patterned hand-stenciled sewing box. "For a woman of your taste and intelligence this offers an unparalleled opportunity. I imagine, just as an offhand guess, that you would enjoy a trip back to the time of King Victoria the Great."

Mercedes winced.

Kim laughed at himself. "Queen, I mean, of course. Good Queen Victoria. For one of your temperament . . ."

"You misinterpret my character entirely," Mercedes replied. It

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was her turn to lean forward interestedly. "I am, of course, a devotee and advocate of the neo-Victorian revival, for reasons which someone of your class couldn't *possibly* understand. My real interests, however, lie deeper. Much deeper. I am a Graecophile." She paused triumphantly, expecting him at last to cower before the Grandeur of her Interests.

"You like Greeks?" he asked innocently.

"*Ancient* Greeks, you ninny," she shouted and, like someone (probably Prometheus) suddenly released, she threw the paperweight. It missed him and demolished an innocent shepherdess. Recovering herself slightly, she tossed the heavy, leather bound, antiqued volume of Aristophanes in his lap. "*That's* what I like. *Intellectual* wit. *Real* art. *Classic* refinement."

"Naturally," Kim said. He longed to pull off his loincloth to mop his sweaty brow, but some instinct told him this would not be *de rigeur*. "We can easily send you back to ancient Greece. You'll go?"

"Of course I'll go. But then," she said regretfully, "there's the matter of the language barrier. I wouldn't be able to understand a word, or ask for a glass of water or where the ladies' . . . come to think of it, there might be many complications."

But Kim was on his feet. "Come," he said, taking her hand. "Let's go right now. No use torturing yourself with these doubts. Surely a woman of your Intelligence and Refinement will find a welcome niche in ancient Greek society. The language is the least problem. We've got a logophone right in the study and you can take it with you. You won't just get a translation in time—you'll also understand and speak the language as if it were your own."

When Mercedes materialized in the front row of the Athenian Theatre of Dionysus in the year 416 B.C., during the Greater Dionysia and specifically during the performance of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, she immediately turned on her logophone.

The first thing she heard was an incredibly crude noise, apparently made by one of the actors. "Static," she thought and blushed anyhow. The crowds about her were roaring with laughter and watching the stage.

The next several lines of dialogue caused Mercedes to turn off her logophone in sheer horror. The flow of obscenity mercifully became a meaningless babble.

She leaned forward myopically to get a better view of the stage because she had forgotten her glasses. This was the flower of Greek drama. The actors were dressed very oddly. They carried

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the strangest looking objects. Almost like totem poles—no, they reminded her of something else. Something—unmentionable.

Huffily arranging the folds of her indignation about her, Mercedes rose to leave.

She made her way up the tiered rows of seats and out onto the slope of the hill. She stood awhile in pensive thought, nursing her disillusion and wishing fervently she had chosen the Lake Poets instead of Aristophanes.

Well, Aristophanes was all washed up as far as *she* was concerned. But then, this was an age full of great names. There were people she should meet and talk to, if she could think of the names. Her mind ground ponderously through Greek Literature in Translation. Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides—and of course people like Pericles and—well, others. And why were they all men? There must have been *some* women.

Aspasia—ah, yes. The wise Aspasia, companion to the noble Pericles and center of a brilliant *salon*. Anyone, Mercedes was sure, would be able to point *her* out.

As these thoughts flashed upon her inward eye people began to surge out of the theatre. Mercedes turned on her logophone and approached a thinly veiled young woman who was heavily made up and seemed to be chewing vigorously on something.

"Sure, honey," the girl answered with comradely spirit. "Everybody knows old Aspasia. Come on, I'll point her out." The girl began to lead Mercedes toward the other side of the theatre. She stopped, finally, and eyed Mercedes curiously. "You from Crete, honey?"

"No," Mercedes answered. "I'm from the Future."

"Refugee from Boeotia," the girl concluded. "I thought you looked corn-fed. Aspasia's got a heart as big as a house. She'll help you out. By the way, my name's Phye."

The girl searched the crowds pouring from the theatre. She finally spotted a tall, regal-looking woman dressed in what looked to be a robe of lavender chiffon.

"Aspasia!" Phye shouted. "Here's someone who wants to see you!" She presented Mercedes. "She's a refugee. I imagine she wants to be introduced around a little. Either that or to locate in a good House."

Aspasia smiled affectionately at the girl and turned to Mercedes. "My dear, you're too *fat* to go around without body bands. And where did you get that *impossible* costume? It doesn't show a thing!"

Mercedes was, for a moment, speechless. Aspasia did not look nearly so regal on close inspection. She was far on the worst side of fifty. Powder and rouge caked her face and mascara was beginning to edge down her

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cheeks. Her hair was frankly a screaming yellow and tortured into an impossible intricacy of curls that bounced gleefully as she walked.

"You're . . . Aspasia?" Mercedes asked haltingly.

"Sure, honey. You come on home with me for a day and then we'll see if we can place you."

It began to dawn on Mercedes that perhaps she was *not* misunderstanding Aspasia. How she wished all this had been Lost in Translation! Still, there would be advantages to being received in Aspasia's house. They walked in silence for a moment, Aspasia waving to her friends along the way. Finally Mercedes turned to her.

"Would it be possible, do you think, for me to meet your husband, the noble Pericles?" Mercedes' heart thudded at the mere thought. She missed her sal volatile badly.

Aspasia looked shocked and spoke in a hissing whisper. "Sh, honey. I'm *legally* married now. My husband is terribly jealous of my past. Pericles is dead twelve years this Dionysia. Where have you been?"

Mercedes berated herself for not having read up on history before she came. It would have been so easy to get a few more facts. But Kim had been so masterful and had rushed her into the machine so fast . . .

"If I told you, Aspasia, you might not believe me."

"Never mind, dear," Aspasia said comfortingly, "you'll look like an Athenian hetaira by the time I've finished with you."

Mercedes was, really, in a state of shock. She kept trying to tell Aspasia, "Really, you know, I'm not that kind of girl."

And Aspasia would answer, "Either you're the daughter of an Athenian citizen or you're not. If you're not, you're a working girl and what other sort of work is there? I mean for a woman with any self-respect at all?"

While Aspasia was painting her face with a practiced hand, Mercedes, almost overcome by the smells of various perfumes, put the question that had been uppermost in her mind for some time. "Do you still hold your brilliant *salons*?"

Aspasia shook her head in puzzlement. "I used to run a House," she said, "when I first came here from Miletus. But after I met Pericles—well, I gave up my career."

"Then you really were his Intellectual and Spiritual Companion?"

Aspasia put down the tweezers with which she had been plucking Mercedes' eyebrows. She sat in thought for a moment, and a hint of tears dampened her eyes.

"We used to recline around the

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tables in the evening, talking the night away and settling the problems of the world. We thought we owned it. For a while, I guess we did. And now look at it!" She sighed, and picked up the tweezers. "Don't you think the Sicilian Expedition is what we need to put new life into us?"

"Why, I don't know," Mercedes answered. It was her turn to be puzzled. "I don't know anything about war and politics."

"Don't know!" Aspasia gasped. "What do you expect to talk to men about? You don't know anything about the art of politics, the art of war, or even the art of love! What *do* you know?"

"Well," Mercedes began. She was about to say she was Interested in Greek Culture, but it occurred to her that, considering the ignorance she had displayed thus far, Aspasia might receive this rather rudely.

Aspasia stood up. "Now you're all painted and dressed and you look very nice if I do say so myself. I don't like to be unkind, dear, but I think you'd better begin your education from the very basic things. I'll have a slave take you to the temple of Aphrodite Pandemos. Remember, it's a sacrilege to refuse yourself to anyone, be he ever so old or ugly. You can't accept money, of course, but it's very good practice."

Mercedes had no intention of hanging around the temple of Aphrodite. However, it was clear that she could expect no more from Aspasia, who had shown her a real, if misguided, kindness. She therefore followed the slave out into the thronged and evil-smelling streets.

As they made their way through the marketplace, she experienced an entirely new and unexpected pleasure. Men, she noted, were staring at her with looks she could only describe as "admiring." She found herself clutching unconsciously at the neck of her vermilion peplum, which dipped dangerously low. She gasped with surprise and (admit it) some delight when a handsome man with an expensive-looking bracelet on his arm fell into step beside her and began murmuring exaggerated compliments. Life began to take on an entirely new meaning.

They reached the temple of Aphrodite and stood in the shade of a pleasant little grove of trees. The slave left and the young man stood with arms folded, watching her with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes. Mercedes took one look at the drunk sailors and clumsy, embarrassed-looking farmers standing around. She shuddered and turned to her new admirer, who now looked to her like a heaven-sent protector.

"What's the matter, kitten?" he asked. He had a languid, self-possessed air that reminded Mercedes, with a (no other way to

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describe it) slight thrill of Kim. "Got cold feet? Can't say I blame you."

"I'm cold all over. Oh, I do wish I had my—" There was no Greek word for it. "Salts," had entirely the wrong connotation. . . . "I simply don't know what to do," she went on, thinking that with her eyebrows plucked she must look rather appealingly helpless.

"I do," he said with a disarming smile. "You just come along with me and let your sacred obligations go for a while. It happens, by pure luck, that I'm having a little party tonight and we're short one flute girl." He took her elbow and guided her along a narrow, winding street.

"I don't play the flute."

"Darling, you're marvellous!"

"But I really don't. Whatever gave you that idea?"

"Never mind. The flute-playing part always bores me anyhow. Do you want to come home with me now or have my slave come for you tonight?"

Tears trembled on Mercedes' lashes. "I don't know where I'd go. I have no home here and I can hardly go home with a complete stranger."

The young man laughed and hugged her briefly. "Stranger! You really don't know who I am? I'm Callias!"

"Callias?"

"Son of Hipponicus. Of course everybody and his brother in Athens is named Callias. It's annoying. But I'm Callias rich as Croesus, *not* Callias the charcoal seller. Zeus, I thought every woman in Athens knew me. My person may pall but my money never fails to fascinate. . . ."

Mercedes spent the afternoon alone in a room in the women's quarters. It was well furnished with mirrors, cosmetics and unguents, and she spent her time repainting her face. She had drifted far, she realized, from her neo-Victorian principles. But somehow, now, especially in view of her new face in the mirror, the *Bifurcate Review* seemed very far away.

Evening was well under way when the flute girls arrived, swirling in their bright dresses and chattering like a swarm of little tropical birds. Mercedes recognized Phye, her friend from the theatre, and reintroduced herself.

"Darling, Aspasia's done *wonders* with you. Only *do* try not to talk through your nose." Phye introduced her around and Mercedes winced at some of the nicknames which were much too obvious to be Lost in Translation.

"You must be for Callias," a bland-faced little brunette said. She patted Mercedes confidentially. "I had him last. If he's not carrying a purse get a nice bit of jewelry. He's stingy when he's sober."

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Mercedes found this kind of talk distinctly unpleasant. It was becoming too obvious that Callias' Intentions were not Honorable. She began to wonder wildly when Kim and Jack would translate her back to her own time. In the excitement of being practically pushed into the little telephone booth that was the time machine, she had forgotten to ask.

They were soon ushered into the banquet room. The men were lying on couches by little tables arranged in a large circle. The other girls stood inside the circle, holding their flutes and ready to perform. Mercedes looked helplessly at Callias. He had a large cup in his hand and his eyes looked unnaturally bright. He had clearly been Drinking.

He sprang up and lifted Mercedes onto one of the tables. "Gentlemen," he announced, "I want you to meet the find of the season. She actually *doesn't play the flute.* Can you think of anything more refreshing?"

The other girls eyed Mercedes jealously. Why hadn't *they* thought of an approach like that?

Mercedes drank her first cup of wine out of politeness. . . . The second she tried only to see if it would taste better than the first. . . . The third, fourth, and succeeding ones she drank for the sheer pleasure of it all.

A time came when she was aware that Callias was looking deep into her eyes and saying, "You know, you're a terribly attractive woman."

There was, Mercedes found, a warming pleasure in seeing Callias with the torch light flickering over his well-oiled muscles. It was even more warming to touch him. Never, in all her reading, had she come across such a sensation.

She reached up and pulled his short, curly beard. "Hell with the *Bifurcate Review,*" she hiccoughed. "Kiss me again that funny way. . . ."

Mercedes woke to a feeling of cramped discomfort. She reluctantly forced her eyes open and found herself curled grotesquely in the little booth of the time machine. Her head ached abominably, and there was an unfamiliar furry taste in her mouth. Being translated back to her own time, she reflected, apparently had side effects which the trip to the past had not.

She groped to her feet and opened the door.

Her father and Kim stared openmouthed. Jack finally said, "We've been waiting three hours for you to come out. The door has to be opened from the inside."

Kim was still gazing at her in amazement and (no doubt about it) admiration. He whistled softly.

Her father paused, looked her over again, and took her in his arms. "My little girl seems to have

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grown up," he said, patting her head as though she had unexpectedly won a blue ribbon in a horse show. "But, dear, what happened?"

"I don't quite know," Mercedes answered truthfully. "That is, I'm not *sure*."

On the other hand, she thought a touch complacently, it had not been a neo-Victorian evening—what else, after all, *could* have happened?

"I think we may assume," Mercedes went on with some archness, and plainly not speaking of her adenoids, "that something was Lost in Translation."

## A VAMPIRE'S SAGA

A particularly inoffensive and extremely helpful wraith I encountered in a Carpathian
Mountain pass
Told my parents that the hunting grounds were better and the bloodsucking grass
Was greener, absolutely without peer,
In the western hemisphere.
So my mother and father packed and shipped two large Transylvanian-earth-filled coffins for themselves and my short bier
To a New York pier.
In America, Father got a job as a cupper and leecher in a Russian-type steam bath where he constantly amazes his employer by growing remarkably stout,
While he never brings his lunch and never eats out.
Mother's luck was rather slack
(Three anemic girls and a haemophiliac).
My own case, however, is unique,
And has been so for the better part of a week.
For, ever since I flew into an uptown hotel in the usual form of a bat and tapped this sleeping fellow's vena azygos major and/or
Minor, I've been staying up all day turning out more verses than George Gordon, Lord Byron, and Walter Savage Landor.
Where, you may well ask, did I find the compulsion to ride this poetic hobby horse?
Why, in the vein of Ogden Nash, of course.

—NORMAN BELKIN

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*The famous Montavarde's camera captured a certain luminous quality in the photographs it took that was unique. What a pity that his famous shot of the infamous* Messe Noire *should have been banned! What a delight for Mr. Collins to find the actual camera in Mr. Azel's shop!*

# The Montavarde Camera

**by Avram Davidson**

MR. AZEL'S SHOP WAS SET IN BE-tween a glazier's shop and a woolen-draper's; three particularly short steps led down to it. The shop-front was narrow; a stranger hurrying by would not even notice it, for the grimy brick walling of the glazier's was part of a separate building, and extended farther out.

Three short steps down, and there was a little area-way before the door, and it was always clean, somehow. The slattern wind blew bits of straw and paper scraps in circles up and down the street, leaving its discarded playthings scattered all about, but not in the area-way in front of the shop door. Just above the height of a man's eye there was a rod fastened to the inside of the door, and from it descended in neat folds a red velveteen curtain. The shop's window, to the door's left, was veiled in the same way. In old-fashioned lettering, the gold-leaf figures of the street number stood alone on the glass pane.

There was no slot for letters, no name, or sign, nothing displayed on door or window. The shop was a blank, it made no impression on the eye, conveyed no message to the brain. If a few of the people scurrying by noticed it at all, it was only to assume it was empty.

No cats took advantage of this quiet backwater to doze in the sun, although at least two of them always reclined under the projecting window of the draper. On this particular day the pair was jolted out of its calm by the running feet of Mr. Lucius Collins, who was chasing his hat. It was a high-crowned bowler, a neat and altogether proper hat, and as he chased it indignantly, Mr. Col-



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lins puffed and breathed through his mouth — a small, full, red-lipped mouth, attended on either side by a pair of well-trimmed, sandy, mutton-chop whiskers.

*Outrageous!* Mr. Collins thought, his stout little legs pumping furiously. *Humiliating!* And no one to be blamed for it, either, not even the Government, or the Boers, or Mrs. Collins, she of the sniffles and rabbity face. *Shameful* The gold seals on his watch-chain jingled and clashed together and beat against the stomach it confined, and the wind carried the hat at a rapid clip along the street.

Just as the wind passed the draper's, it abruptly abandoned the object of its game, and the forsaken bowler fell with a thud in front of the next shop. It rolled down the first, the second, and the third step, and leaned wearily against the door.

Mr. Collins trotted awkwardly down the steps, and knelt down to seize it. His head remained where it was, as did his hands and knees. About a foot of uncurtained glass extended from the lower border of the red velveteen to the wooden door-frame, and through this Mr. Lucius Collins looked. It almost seemed that he gaped.

Inside the shop, looking down at Mr. Collins' round and red face, was a small, slender gentleman, who leaned against a show case as if he were (the thought flitted through Mr. Collins' mind) posing for his photograph. The mild amusement evident on his thin features brought to Mr. Collins the realization that his position was, at best, undignified. He took up his hat, arose, brushed the errant bowler with his sleeve, dusted his knees, and entered the shop. Somewhere in the back a bell tinkled as he did so.

A rug, also red, covered the floor and muffled his footsteps. The place was small, but well-furnished in the solid style more fashionable in past days. Nothing was shabby or worn, yet nothing was new. A gas jet with mantle projected from a panelled wall whose dark wood had the gleam of much polishing, but the burner was not lit, although the shop was rather dark. Several chairs upholstered in leather were set at intervals around the shop. There was no counter, and there were no shelves, and only the one showcase. *It* was empty, and only a well-brushed Ascot top-hat rested on it.

Mr. Collins did not wish the slender little gentleman to receive the impression that he, Lucius, made a practice of squatting down and peering beneath curtained shop windows.

"Are you the proprietor?" he asked. The gentleman, still smiling, said that he was. It was a dry smile, and its owner was a dry-looking person. His was a

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long nose set in a long face. His chin was cleft.

The gentleman's slender legs were clad in rather baggy trousers, but it was obvious that they were the aftermath of the period when baggy trousers were the fashion, and were not the result of any carelessness in attire. The cloth was of a design halfway between plaid and checkered, and a pair of sharply pointed and very glossy boots were on his small feet. A grey waistcoat, crossed by a light gold watch chain, a rather short frock coat, and a wing collar with a black cravat, completed his dress. No particular period was stamped on his clothes, but one felt that in his prime—whenever that had been—this slender little gentleman had been a dandy . . . a beau . . . a toff . . . in a dry, smiling sort of way.

From his nose to his chin two deep lines were etched, and there were laughter wrinkles about the corners of his eyes. His hair was brown and rather sparse, cut in the conventional fashion. Its only unusual feature was that the little gentleman had on his forehead, after the manner of the late Lord Beaconsfield, a ringlet of the type commonly known as a "spit-curl." And his nicely appointed little shop contained, as far as Mr. Collins could see, absolutely no merchandise at all.

"The wind, you know, it—ah, blew my hat off and carried it away—dropped it at your door, so to speak."

Mr. Collins spoke awkwardly, aware that the man seemed still to be somewhat amused, and believed that this was due to his own precipitate entry. In order to cover his embarrassment and justify his continued presence inside, he asked in a rush, "What is it exactly, that you sell here?" and waved his arm at the unstocked room.

"What is it you wish to buy?" the man asked.

Mr. Collins flushed again, and gaped again, and fumbled about for an answer.

"Why, what I meant was: in what line *are* you? You have nothing displayed whatsoever, you know. Not a thing. How is one to know what sort of stock you have, if you don't put it about where it can be seen?" As he spoke, Mr. Collins felt his self-possession returning, and went on with increased confidence to say: "Now, just for example, my own particular avocation is photography—but if you have nothing displayed to show that you are in that way, I daresay I would pass by here every day and never think to stop in."

The proprietor's smile increased slightly, and his eyebrows arched up to his curl.

"But it so happens that I, too, am interested in photography, and although I have no display or

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sign to beguile you, in you came. I do not care for advertising—puffing—it is, I think, vulgar. My equipment is not for your tuppeny-tintype customer, nor will I pander to his tastes."

"Your equipment?" Mr. Collins again surveyed the place. "Where is it?" A most unusual studio—if studio it was—or shop, he thought; but he was impressed by what he considered a commendable attitude on the part of the slender gentleman—a standard so elevated that he refused to lower it by the most universally accepted customs of commerce.

The proprietor pointed to the most shadowy corner of the shop. There, in the semi-darkness between the showcase and the wall, a large camera of archaic design stood upon a tripod. Mr. Collins approached it with interest, and began to examine it.

Made out of some unfamiliar type of hardwood, with its lens-piece gleaming a richer gold than ordinary brass, the old camera was in every respect a museum-piece; yet, despite its age, it seemed to be in good working order. Mr. Collins ran his hand over the smooth surface; as he did so, he felt a rough spot on the back. It was evidently someone's name, he discovered, burned or carved into the wood, but now impossible to read in the thickening dusk. He turned to the proprietor.

"It is rather dark back here."

"Of course—your pardon—I was forgetting. It is something remarkable, isn't it? There is no such workmanship nowadays—years of effort, that took, you know." As he spoke, he lit the jet and turned up the gas. The soft, yellow light of the flame filled the shop, hissing quietly to itself. More and more shops now had the electric lights; this one, certainly, never would.

Mr. Collins reverently bowed his head and peered at the writing. In a flourishing old-fashioned script, someone long ago had graved the name of *Gaston Montavarde*. Mr. Collins looked up in amazement.

"Montavarde's camera? Here?"

"Here, before you. Montavarde worked five years on his experimental models before he made the one you see now. At that time he was still—so the books tell you—the pupil of Daguerre. But to those who knew him, the pupil far excelled the master; just as Daguerre himself had far excelled Niepce. If Montavarde had not died just as he was nearing mastery of the technique he sought, his work would be world-famous. As it is, appreciation of Montavarde's style and importance is largely confined to the few—of which I count myself one. You, sir, I am pleased to note, are one of the others. One of the few others."

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Here the slender gentleman gave a slight bow. Mr. Collins was extremely flattered, not so much by the bow—all shopkeepers bowed—but by the implied compliment to his knowledge.

In point of fact, he knew very little of Montavarde, his life, or his work. Who does? He was familiar, as are all students of early photography, with Montavarde's study of a street scene in Paris during the 1848 Revolution—*Barricades in the Morning*, which shows a ruined embattlement and the still bodies of its defenders, is perhaps the first war photograph ever taken; it is usually, and wrongly, called a Daguerrotype. Perhaps not more than six or eight, altogether, of Montavarde's pictures are known to the general public, and all are famous for that peculiar luminous quality that seems to come from some unknown source within the scene. Collins was also aware that several more Montavardes in the possession of collectors of the esoteric and erotic could not be published or displayed. One of the most famous of these is the so-called *La Messe Noire*—

Du Val, the renegade priest of Lyons, who was in the habit of conducting the Black Mass of the Demonolaters, used for some years as his "altar" the naked body of the famous courtesan, La Manchette. It is this scene that Montavarde was reputed to have photographed. Like many popular women of her type, La Manchette might eventually have retired to grow roses and live to a great age, had she not been murdered by one of her numerous lovers. Montavarde's photographs of the guillotine (*The Widow*) before and after the execution, had been banned by the French censor under Louis Napoleon as a matter of public policy.

All this is a digression, of course. The facts are mentioned because they were known to Mr. Lucius Collins, and largely explained his awe and reverence on seeing the — presumably — same camera which had photographed these scenes.

"How did you get this?" he asked, not troubling to suppress or conceal his eagerness.

"For more than thirty years," explained the proprietor, "it was the property of a North American. He came to London, met with financial reverses and pawned his equipment. He did not know, one assumes, that it was *the* Montavarde camera. Nor did he redeem. I had little or no competition at the auction. Later I heard he had gone back to America—or made away with himself, some said. But no matter: the camera was a *bon marche*. I never expected to see it again. I sold it soon after, but the payments were not kept up, and so here it is."

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On hearing that the camera could be purchased, Mr. Collins began to treat for its sale (though he knew he could really not afford to buy), and would not take "no." In short, an agreement was drawn up, whereby he was to pay a certain sum down and something each month for eight months.

"Shall I make out the cheque in pounds or in guineas?" he asked.

"Guineas, of course. I do not consider myself a tradesman." The slender gentleman smiled, and he fingered his watch-chain as Mr. Collins drew out his cheque-book.

"What name am I to write, Sir? I do not—"

"My name, sir, is Azel. The initials, A. Z. . . . Ah. Just so. Can you manage the camera by yourself? Then I bid you a good evening, Mr. Collins. You have made a rare acquisition, indeed. Allow me to open the door."

Mr. Collins brought his purchase home in a four-wheeler, and spent the rest of the evening dusting and polishing. Mrs. Collins—a wispy, weedy little figure, who wore her hair in what she imagined was the manner of the Princess of Wales—Mrs. Collins had got a cold, as usual. She agreed that the camera *was* in excellent condition, but—with a snuffle—she pointed out that he had spent far too much money on it. In her younger days, as one of the Misses Wilkins, she had done quite a good bit of amateur photography herself, but she had given it up because it cost far too much money.

She repeated her remarks some evenings later to her brother, the Reverend Wycliffe Wilkins, making his weekly call.

"Mind you," said Mr. Collins to his brother-in-law, "I don't know just what process the inventor used in developing his plates, but I did the best I could, and I don't think it's half bad. See here. This is the only thing I've done so far. One of those old Tudor houses in Great Cumberland Street. They say it was one of the old plague houses. Pity it's got to be torn down to make way for that new road. I thought I'd beat the wreckers to it."

"Very neatly done, I'm sure," said his brother-in-law. "I don't know much about photography myself. But evidently you haven't heard that about this particular house. No? Happened yesterday. Cook was out marketing, and just as she came up to the corner, the house collapsed in a pile of dust. Shoddy workmanship somewhere; I mean, the house couldn't have been more than three hundred years old. Of course, there was no one in it, but still, it gave Cook quite a turn. I suppose there's no harm in your having this camera; as for me, though, considering its associations, I wouldn't have it in the house. Naked women, indeed!

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saving your presence, Mary."

"Oh, come now,' said Mr. Collins. "Montavarde was an artist."

"Many artists have been pious, decent people, Lucius. There can be no compromise between good and evil." Mrs. Collins snuffled her agreement. Mr. Collins pursed his little mouth and said no more until his good humor was restored by the maid's coming in with the tea-tray.

"I suppose, then, Wycliffe, you wouldn't think of letting me take your picture?"

"Well, I don't know why ever not," Mrs. Collins protested. "After the amount of money Lucius spent on it, we ought to make *some* use out of it, I think. Lucius will take your likeness, Wycliffe, whenever it's convenient. Lucius has a great deal of free time. Raspberry jam or gooseberry, Wycliffe?"

Mr. Collins photographed his brother-in-law in the Vicarage garden—alone, and then with his curate, the Reverend Osias Gomm. Both clerical gentlemen were very active in the temperance movement, and this added a note of irony to the tragic events of the following day. It was the carriage of Stout, the brewer; there was no doubt about that, and the horses had shied at a scrap of paper. The witnesses (six of them) had described seeing the two clergymen start across the street, deep in conversation. They described how the carriage came flying around the corner.

"They never knew wot 'it 'em," the witnesses agreed. Mrs. Collins said that was the only thing that comforted her. She said nothing, of course, about the estate (three thousand pounds in the six per-cents); but she did mention the picture.

"How bright it is, Lucius," she said. "Almost shining."

After the funeral she felt free to talk about the financial affairs of her late brother, and until the estate was in a fair way of being settled, Mr. Collins had no time for photography. He did keep up the monthly payments on the camera, however, although he found them rather a drain. After all, it had not been *his* income which had just been increased by 180 pounds *per annum*.

It was almost November before Mrs. Collins would consent to have a fire laid. The inheritance of her brother's share of their patrimony had not changed her habits for what her husband, if no one else, would have considered the better. Although he still transferred the same amount each quarter from his personal account to the household funds, there was less and less to show for it each week. Meat appeared on the table less often, and it was much more likely to be a piece of the neck than a cut off the joint. The tea

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grew dustier and the pieces of butter shrunk in size, and more than once Mr. Collins had asked for another bit of cake at tea and been told (truthfully, as he learned by prowling around the kitchen later at night) that there wasn't another bit of cake in the house. (Perhaps it was his going to sleep on an empty—and hence, nervous—stomach which caused the odd dreams that began about this time . . . confused scenes he could never remember, come daylight, and a voice—flat—resonant—repeating over and over, *"The life is in the light . . . the life is in the light . . ."*)

He had, of course, protested, and it had, of course, done him no good at all. Mrs. Collins, with a snuffle, spoke of increased prices, the unsteady condition of World Affairs, and the necessity of Setting Something Aside Against the Future, because (she said), Who Knows?

So, at any rate, here it was November, and a nice sea-coal fire in the grate, with Mr. Collins sitting by it in his favorite chair, reading the newspaper. (There had formerly been two, but Mrs. Collins had stopped one of them in the interests of domestic economy.) There were a number of interesting bits in the paper that evening, and occasionally Mr. Collins would read one of them aloud. Mrs. Collins was unravelling some wool.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Collins.

"What is that, Lucius?"

"'Unusual Pronouncement by the Bishop of Lyons.'" He looked over at his wife. "Shall I read it to you?"

"Do."

His Grace the Bishop of Lyons had found it necessary to warn all the faithful against a most horrible series of crimes that had been recently perpetrated in the City and See of Lyons. It was a sign of the infamy and decadence of the age that, not once, but six times, in the course of the past year, consecrated wafers had been stolen from churches and rectories in the City and See of Lyons. The purpose of these thefts could only indicate one thing, and it behooved all of the faithful, and so forth. There was little doubt (wrote the Paris Correspondent of Mrs. Collins' newspaper) that the Bishop referred to the curious ceremony generally called the Black Mass, which, it would appear, was still being performed in parts of France; and not merely, as might be assumed, among the more uneducated elements of the population.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Collins.

"Ah, those French!" said Mrs. Collins. "Wasn't it Lyons—wasn't that the place that this unpleasant person came from? The camera man?"

"Montavarde?" Mr. Collins looked up in surprise. "Perhaps . . .

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I don't know. What makes you think so?"

"Didn't poor Wycliffe say so on that last night he was here?"

"Did he? I don't remember."

"He must have. Else how could I know?"

This was a question which required no answer; but it aroused other questions in Mr. Collins' mind. That night he had the dream again, and he recalled it very clearly on awakening: There was a woman, a foreign woman . . . though how he knew this, he could not say. It was not her voice, for she never spoke, only gestured: horrid, wanton gestures, too! Nor was it in her clothes, for she wore none. And she had something in her hand, about the size of a florin, curiously marked, and she offered it to him. When he went to take it, she snatched it back, laughing, and thrust it into her red, red mouth. . . . And all the while the voice—inflectionless, echoing—repeated over and again, *"The light is in the life . . . the light is in the life. . . .* It seemed, somehow, a familiar voice.

The next day found him at his bookdealer's, the establishment of little Mr. Pettigew, the well-known antiquary—referred to by younger and envious members of the trade as "the well-known antiquity." There, under pretense of browsing, Mr. Collins read as much as he could on demonolatry in general, and the Black Mass in particular. It was most interesting, but, as the books all dated from the previous century, there was no mention of either Duval or Montavarde. Mr. Collins tipped his hat to the bookdealer (it was the same bowler) and left the shop.

He bought an *Illustrated London News* at a tobacconist's, got a seat on top of the omnibus, and prepared to enjoy the ride home. It was a bright day despite the time of year; one of the brightest Guy Fawkes' Days that Mr. Collins could remember.

The *Illustrated,* he noted, was showing more and more photographs as time went on, and fewer drawings. Progress, progress, thought Mr. Collins, looking with approval and affection at a picture of the Duke of York and his sons, the little princes, all in Highland costume. Then he turned the page, and saw something which almost caused him to drop the paper. It was a picture of a dreadnought, but the style, and not the subject, fixed his attention to the page.

"The above photograph," read the caption, "of the ill-fated American battleship, the U.S.S. *Maine,* was taken shortly before it left for Habana, on its last voyage. Those familiar with photography will be at once attracted by the peculiar luminosity of the photograph, which is reminiscent

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of the work of the Frenchman, Montavarde. The *Maine* was built at—" Mr. Collins read no further. He began to think, began to follow a train of thought alien to his mind. Shying away from any wild and outrageous fantasies, Mr. Collins began to enumerate as best he could all the photographs known to him to have been taken by the Montavarde Camera.

*Barricades In The Morning* proved nothing, and neither did *The Widow*: no living person appeared in either. On the other hand, consider the matter of La Manchette, the subject of Montavarde's picture *La Messe Noire;* consider the old house in Great Cumberland Street, and the Reverends Wilkins and Gomm. Consider also the battleship *Maine.*

After considering all this Mr. Collins found himself at his stop. He went directly home, took up the camera in his arms, and descended with it to the basement.

Was there some quality in the camera which absorbed the life of its subjects? Some means whereby that life was transmuted into light, a light instilled into the photograph, leaving the subjects to die . . . ?.

Mr. Collins took an axe and began to destroy the camera. The wood was intensely hard, and he removed his coat before falling to work again. . . . Try as he might, Mr. Collins could not dent the camera, box, brass or lens. He stopped at last, sweat pouring down his face, and heard his wife's voice calling down to him. What*ever* was he doing?

"I'm breaking up a box for kindling wood," he shouted back. And, then, even as she warned him not to use too much wood, that the wood had to last them another fortnight, that the price of wood had gone up—even as she chattered away, Mr. Collins had another idea. He carried the camera up to the fire and thrust it in. He heaped on the coals, he threw in parafin at the cost of his eyebrows, and he plied the bellows.

Half an hour's effort saw the camera not only unconsumed, but unscorched. He finally removed it from the fire in despair, and stood there, hot and dishevelled, not knowing what to do. All doubts that he had felt earlier were now removed. Previously he had been uncertain as to the significance of Montavarde's presence with his dreadful camera at the Rites of Lucifer, at the foul ritual conducted by the renegade priest Duval. It was *not* merely as a spectator that the cameraman had attended these blasphemous parodies. The spitting on the crucifix, the receiving of the witch mark, the signing of the compact with his own blood, the ceremonial stabbing of the stolen Host while awaiting the awful moment when the priest or priest-

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ess of the unholy sect declared manifest in his or her own body the presence of the Evil One—surely Montavarde had *done* all these things, and not just seen them.

Mr. Collins felt that he needed some air. He put on his hat and coat and went down to the street. The breeze cooled his hot face and calmed his thoughts. Several children came down the street towards him, lighting firecrackers and tossing them into the air.

> *"Remember, remember, the 5th of November*
> *Was gunpowder, treason, and plot"*

the children began to chant as they came up to him. They were wheeling a tatterdemalion old bath-chair, and in it a scarecrow of a Guy, clad in old clothes; just as Mr. Collins had done as a boy.

> *"I see no reason why gunpowder treason*
> *Should ever be forgot"*

ended the traditional phrases, and then the outstretched, expectant grimy paws, and a general cry of "Remember the Guy, sir! Remember the Guy!"

Mr. Collins distributed some money to the eager group, even though he could see that his wife, who had come down and was now looking out of the first floor window, was shaking her head at him—pursing her lips, pantomiming that he wasn't to give them a farthing. He looked away and glanced at the Guy.

Its torn trousers were of a semi-plaid design, its scuffed boots were sharply pointed. A greasy, grey waistcoat, a ragged sort of frockcoat, a drooping and dirty wing collar, and a battered Ascot top-hat completed its dress. The costume seemed unpleasantly familiar to Mr. Collins, but he could not quite place it. Just then a gust of wind blew off the old topper and revealed the Guy's head. It was made of one of those carven coconuts that visitors from southern countries sometimes bring back, and its carven features were a horrible parody of the face of the slender gentleman who had sold the camera.

The children went on their way while Mr. Collins remained standing, his mind a tangle of strange thoughts, and Mrs. Collins frowned down at him from the window. She seemed to be busy with something; her hands moved—It seemed to him that an age passed as he stood there, hand in pocket, thinking of the long-dead Montavarde (how did he die? "Untimely" was the word invariably used), who had purchased, at a price unknown and scarcely to be guessed at, unsurpassable skill in building and using his camera. What should one do? One might place the camera in a large sack,

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or encase it in concrete, and throw it in the Thames.

Or, one might keep it safely hidden in a safe place.

He turned to his house and looked up at Mrs. Collins, there at the window. (What *had* she been busied with?) It seemed to him that she had never looked so much like a rabbit before, and it also occurred to him how much he disliked rabbits and always had, from a boy. That, after all, was not so very long ago. He was still a comparatively young man. Many women might still find him attractive.

Should he submit, like some vegetable, while his wife nibbled, nibbled away at him forever? No: the Way had been shown him; he had fought, but that sort of victory was plainly not to be his. So be it; he would follow the way which had been open to him since the moment he took the camera. And he would use it again, with full knowledge.

He started up the steps, and had just reached the top one, when a searing pain stabbed him in the chest, and the sun went out. His hat fell off as he dropped. It rolled down the first, the second, and the third step. Mrs. Collins began to scream. It occurred to him, even in that moment of dark agony, how singularly unconvincing those screams sounded. . . .

For some reason, the end did not come at once.

"I'm not completely satisfied with that likeness I took of you just before you were stricken," Mrs. Collins said. "Of course, it *was* the first time I had used a camera since we were married. And the picture, even while you look at it, seems to be growing brighter."

Logically, Mr. Collins thought; for at the same time he was growing weaker. Well, it did not signify.

"Your affairs *are* all in order, aren't they, Lucius?" Her eyes, as she gazed at him, were bright, birdlike—a bird, of course, is not human. He made no reply. "Yes, to be sure they are. I made certain. Except for this unpleasant Mr. Azel asking me for money he claims is still owing on the camera. Well, I shan't pay it. All I can do to keep myself. But I mean to show him. He can have his old camera back, and much good may it do him. I took my mother's ring and I scratched the nasty lens up completely, with the diamond . . ."

Her voice was further away now ". . . tradition in our family, you know: It's an old diamond, an heirloom; it has been in our family ever so long, and they say that it was once set in a jeweled monstrance that stood upon the high altar at Canterbury before the days of good King Harry.

"*That* will teach that Mr. A. Z. Azel a good lesson . . ."

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*Oyster pirate, seaman, war correspondent, seeker of adventure, Jack London published 51 books, and they are filled with rich, vital writing of a sort that is rare in any age. . . . Herewith a tale of the far north, offering information which—particularly if you are a young man and have travelled little—may surprise you.*

# THE ANGRY MAMMOTH

***by Jack London***

I WASH MY HANDS OF HIM AT THE start. I cannot father his tales, nor will I be responsible, particularly, for them. I make these reservations, observe, as a guard upon my own integrity. I possess a certain definite position in a small way, also a wife; and for the good name of the community that honors my existence with its approval, and for the sake of her posterity and mine, I cannot take the chances I once did, nor foster probabilities with the careless improvidence of youth. So, I repeat, I wash my hands of him, this Nimrod, this mighty hunter, this homely, blue-eyed, freckle-faced Thomas Stevens.

Having been honest to myself, and to whatever prospective olive branches my wife may be pleased to tender me, I can now afford to be generous. I shall not criticise the tales told me by Thomas Stevens, and, further, I shall withhold my judgment. For who can prove? or who disprove? I eliminate myself from the proposition, while those of little faith may do as I have done—go find the said Thomas Stevens, and discuss to his face the various matters which, if fortune serve, I shall relate.

As to where he may be found? The directions are simple: anywhere between 53 north latitude and the Pole, on the one hand; and, on the other, the likeliest hunting grounds that lie between the east coast of Siberia and farthermost Labrador.

Thomas Stevens may have toyed prodigiously with truth, but when we first met (it were well to mark this point), he wandered into my camp when I thought myself a thousand miles beyond the outermost post of civilization. At the sight of his human face, the first in weary months, I could have sprung forward and folded



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him in my arms (and I am not by any means a demonstrative man); but to him his visit seemed the most casual thing under the sun.

He just strolled into the light of my camp, passed the time of day after the custom of men on beaten trails, threw my snowshoes the one way and a couple of dogs the other, and so made room for himself by the fire. Said he'd just dropped in to borrow a pinch of soda and to see if I had any decent tobacco. He plucked forth an ancient pipe, loaded it with painstaking care, and, without as much as by your leave, whacked half the tobacco of my pouch into his. He sighed with the contentment of the just, and literally absorbed the smoke from the crisping yellow flakes, and it did my smoker's heart good to behold him.

Hunter? Trapper? Prospector? He shrugged his shoulders. No; just sort of knocking round a bit. Had come up from the Great Slave some time since, and was thinking of traipsing over into the Yukon country. The Factor of Koshim had spoken about the discoveries on the Klondike, and he was of a mind to run over for a peep. I noticed that he spoke of the Klondike in the archaic vernacular, calling it the Reindeer River—a conceited custom that the Old Timers employ against the *che-cha-quas* and all tenderfeet in general. But he did it so naïvely and as such a matter of course, that there was no sting, and I forgave him. He also had it in view, he said, before he crossed the divide into the Yukon, to make a little run up Fort o' Good Hope way.

Now Fort o' Good Hope is a far journey to the north, over and beyond the Circle, in a place where the feet of few men have trod; and when a nondescript ragamuffin comes in out of the night, from nowhere in particular, to sit by one's fire and discourse on such in terms of "traipsing" and "a little run," it is fair time to rouse up and shake off the dream. Whereupon I looked about me; saw the fly, and, underneath, the pine boughs spread for the sleeping furs; saw the grub sacks, the camera, the frosty breaths of the dogs circling on the edge of the light; and, above, a great streamer of the aurora bridging the zenith from southeast to northwest.

I shivered. There is a magic in the Northland night, that steals in on one like fevers from malarial marshes. You are clutched and downed before you are aware. Then I looked to the snowshoes, lying prone and crossed where he had flung them. Also I had an eye to my tobacco pouch. Half, at least, of its goodly store had vamosed. That settled it. Fancy had not tricked me after all.

Crazed with suffering, I thought, looking steadfastly at the

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man—one of those wild stampeders, strayed far from his bearings and wandering like a lost soul through great vastnesses and unknown deeps.

So I led him on in talk, and soon I marvelled, for he talked of game and the ways thereof. He had killed the Siberian wolf of westernmost Alaska, and the chamois in the secret Rockies. He averred he knew the haunts where the last buffalo still roamed; that he had hung on the flanks of the caribou when they ran by the hundred thousand, and slept in the Great Barrens on the musk-ox's winter trail.

And I shifted my judgment accordingly (the first revision, but by no account the last), and deemed him a monumental effigy of truth. Why it was I know not but the spirit moved me to repeat a tale told to me by a man who had dwelt in the land too long to know better. It was of the great bear that hugs the steep slopes of St. Elias, never descending to the levels of the gentler inclines. Now God so constituted this creature for its hillside habitat that the legs of one side are all of a foot longer than those of the other. This is mighty convenient, as will be readily admitted. So I hunted this rare beast in my own name, told it in the first person, present tense, painted the requisite locale, gave it the necessary garnishings and touches of verisimilitude, and looked to see the man stunned by the recital.

Not he. Had he doubted, I could have forgiven him. Had he objected, denying the dangers of such a hunt by virtue of the animal's inability to turn about and go the other way—had he done this, I say, I could have taken him by the hand for the true sportsman that he was.

Not he. He sniffed, looked on me, and sniffed again; then gave my tobacco due praise, thrust one foot into my lap, and bade me examine the gear. It was a *mucluc* of the Innuit pattern, sewed together with sinew threads, and devoid of beads or furbelows. But it was the skin itself that was remarkable. In that it was all of half an inch thick, it reminded me of walrus-hide; but there the resemblance ceased, for no walrus ever bore so marvellous a growth of hair. On the side and ankles this hair was well-nigh worn away, from friction with underbrush and snow; but around the top and down the more sheltered back it was coarse, dirty black, and very thick.

I parted it with difficulty and looked beneath for the fine fur that is common with northern animals, but found it in this case to be absent. This, however, was compensated for by the length. Indeed, the tufts that had survived wear and tear measured all of seven or eight inches.

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I looked up into the man's face, and he pulled his foot down and asked, "Find hide like that on your St. Elias bear?"

I shook my head. "Nor on any other creature of land or sea," I answered candidly. The thickness of it, and the length of the hair, puzzled me.

"That," he said, and said it without the slightest hint of impressiveness, "that came from a mammoth."

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed. "The mammoth, my dear sir, long ago vanished from the earth. We know it once existed, by the fossil remains that we have unearthed, and by a frozen carcass that the Siberian sun saw fit to melt from out the bosom of a glacier; but we also know that no living specimen exists. Our explorers—"

At this word he broke in impatiently. "Your explorers? Pish! A weakly breed. Let us hear no more of them. But tell me, O man, what you know of the mammoth and his ways."

To begin with, I emphasized that the animal was prehistoric. I mentioned the Siberian sand bars that abounded with ancient mammoth bones; spoke of the large quantities of fossil ivory purchased from the Innuits by the Alaska Commercial Company; and acknowledged having myself mined six- and eight-foot tusks from the pay gravel of the Klondike creeks. "All fossils," I concluded, "found in the midst of débris deposited through countless ages."

"I remember when I was a kid," Thomas Stevens sniffed (he had a most confounded way of sniffing), "that I saw a petrified watermelon. Hence, though mistaken persons sometimes delude themselves into thinking that they are really raising or eating them, there are no such things as extant watermelons."

"But the question of food," I objected, ignoring his point, which was puerile and without bearing. "The soil must bring forth vegetable life in lavish abundance to support such monstrous creatures. Nowhere in the North is the soil so prolific. Ergo, the mammoth cannot exist."

"I pardon your ignorance concerning many matters of this Northland, for you are a young man and have travelled little; but, at the same time, I am inclined to agree with you on one thing. The mammoth no longer exists. How do I know? I killed the last one with my own right arm", he announced importantly.

Thus spake Nimrod, the Mighty Hunter. I threw a stick of firewood at the dogs and bade them quit their unholy howling, and waited. Undoubtedly this liar of singular felicity would open his mouth and requite me for my St. Elias bear. . . .

"It was this way," he at last be-

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gan, after the appropriate silence had intervened. "I was in camp one day—"

"Where?" I interrupted.

He waved his hand vaguely in the direction of the northeast, where stretched a terra incognita into which vastness few men have strayed and fewer emerged. "I was in camp one day with Klooch. Klooch was as handsome a little *kamooks* as ever whined betwixt the traces or shoved nose into a camp kettle. Her father was a full-blood Malemute from Russian Pastilik on Bering Sea, and I bred her, and with understanding, out of a clean-legged bitch of the Hudson Bay stock. I tell you, O man, she was a corker combination. And now, on this day I have in mind, she was brought to pup through a pure wild wolf of the woods—gray, and long of limb, with big lungs and no end of staying powers. Say! Was there ever the like? It was a new breed of dog I had started, and I could look forward to big things.

"As I have said, she was brought neatly to pup, and safely delivered. I was squatting on my hams over the litter—seven sturdy, blind little beggars—when from behind came a bray of trumpets and crash of brass. There was a rush, like the wind-squall that kicks the heels of the rain, and I was midway to my feet when I was knocked flat on my face. At the same instant I heard Klooch sigh, very much as a man does when you've planted your fist in his belly. You can stake your sack I lay quiet, but I twisted my head around and saw a huge bulk swaying above me. Then the blue sky flashed into view and I got to my feet. A hairy mountain of flesh was just disappearing in the underbrush on the edge of the open. I caught a rear-end glimpse, with a stiff tail, as big in girth as my body, standing out straight behind. The next second only a tremendous hole remained in the thicket, though I could still hear the sounds as of a tornado dying quickly away, underbrush ripping and tearing, and trees snapping and crashing.

"I cast about for my rifle. It had been lying on the ground with the muzzle against a log; but now the stock was smashed, the barrel out of line, and the working-gear in a thousand bits. Then I looked for the slut, and—and what do you suppose?"

I shook my head.

"May my soul burn in a thousand hells if there was anything left of her! Klooch, the seven sturdy, blind little beggars—gone, all gone. Where she had stretched was a slimy, bloody depression in the soft earth, all of a yard in diameter, and around the edges a few scattered hairs."

I measured three feet on the snow, threw about it a circle, and glanced at Nimrod.

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"The beast was thirty long and twenty high," he answered, "and its tusks scaled over eighteen feet. I couldn't believe it myself, at the time, for all that it had just happened. But if my senses had played me, there was the broken gun and the hole in the brush. And there was—or, rather, there was not—Klooch and the pups. O man, it makes me hot all over now when I think of it. Klooch! Another Eve! The mother of a new race! And a rampaging, ranting, old bull mammoth, like a second flood, wiping them, root and branch, off the face of the earth! Do you wonder that the blood-soaked earth cried out to high God? Or that I grabbed the hand-axe and took the trail?"

"The hand-axe?" I exclaimed, startled out of myself by the picture. "The hand-axe, and a big bull mammoth, thirty feet long, twenty feet—"

Nimrod joined me in my merriment, chucking gleefully. "Wouldn't it kill you?" he cried. "Wasn't it a beaver's dream? Many's the time I've laughed about it since, but at the time it was no laughing matter, I was that danged mad, what with the gun and Klooch. Think of it, O man! A brand-new, unclassified, uncopyrighted breed, and wiped out before ever it opened its eyes or took out its intention papers! Well, so be it. Life's full of disappointments, and rightly so. Meat is best after a famine, and a bed softest after a hard trail.

"As I was saying, I took out after the beast with the hand-axe, and hung to its heels down the valley; but when he circled back toward the head, I was left winded at the lower end. Speaking of grub, I might as well stop long enough to explain a couple of points. Up thereabouts, in the midst of the mountains, is an almighty curious formation. There is no end of little valleys, each like the other, much as peas in a pod, and all neatly tucked away with straight, rocky walls rising on all sides. And at the lower ends are always small openings where the drainage or glaciers must have broken out. The only way in is through these mouths, and they are all small, and some smaller than others. As to grub—you've slushed around on the rain-soaked islands of the Alaskan coast down Sitka way, most likely, seeing as you're a traveller. And you know how stuff grows there—big, and juicy, and jungly. Well, that's the way it was with those valleys. Thick, rich soil, with ferns and grasses and such things in patches higher than your head. Rain three days out of four during the summer months; and food in them for a thousand mammoths, to say nothing of small game for man.

"But to get back. Down at the lower end of the valley I got winded and gave over. I began to

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speculate, for when my wind left me my dander got hotter and hotter, and I knew I'd never know peace of mind till I dined on roasted mammoth-foot. And I knew, also, that that stood for *skookum mamook pukapuk*—excuse Chinook, I mean there was a big fight coming. Now the mouth of my valley was very narrow, and the walls steep. High up on one side was one of those big pivot rocks, or balancing rocks, as some call them, weighing all of a couple of hundred tons. Just the thing. I hit back for camp, keeping an eye open so the bull couldn't slip past, and got my ammunition. It wasn't worth anything with the rifle smashed; so I opened the shells, planted the powder under the rock, and touched it off with slow fuse. Wasn't much of a charge, but the old boulder tilted up lazily and dropped down into place, with just space enough to let the creek drain nicely. Now I had him."

"But how did you have him?" I queried. "Who ever heard of a man killing a mammoth with a hand-axe? And, for that matter, with anything else?"

"O man, have I not told you I was mad?" Nimrod replied. "Also, was I not a hunter? And was this not new and most unusual game? A hand-axe? Pish! I did not need it. Listen, and you shall hear of a hunt such as might have happened in the youth of the world when caveman rounded up the kill with hand-axe of stone. Now is it not a fact that man can outwalk the dog or horse? That he can wear them out with the intelligence of his endurance?"

I nodded.

"Well, my valley was perhaps five miles around. The mouth was closed. There was no way to get out. A timid beast was that bull mammoth, and I had him at my mercy. I got on his heels again, hollered like a fiend, pelted him with cobbles, and raced him around the valley three times before I knocked off for supper. Don't you see? A race-course! A man and a mammoth! A hippodrome, with sun, moon, and stars to referee!

"It took me two months to do it, but I did it. And that's no beaver dream. Round and round I ran him, me travelling on the inner circle, eating jerked meat and salmon berries on the run, and snatching winks of sleep between. Of course, he'd get desperate at times and turn. Then I'd head for soft ground where the creek spread out, and lay anathema upon him and his ancestry, and dare him to come on. But he was too wise to bog in a mud puddle. Once he pinned me in against the walls, and I crawled back into a deep crevice and waited. Whenever he felt for me with his trunk, I'd belt him with the hand-axe till he pulled out, shrieking fit to split my

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ear drums, he was that mad. He knew he had me and didn't have me, and it near drove him wild.

"But he was no man's fool. He knew he was safe as long as I stayed in the crevice, and he made up his mind to keep me there. And he was dead right, only he hadn't figured on the commissary. There was neither grub nor water around that spot, so on the face of it he couldn't keep up the siege. He'd stand before the opening for hours, keeping an eye on me and flapping mosquitoes away with his big blanket ears. Then the thirst would come on him and he'd ramp round and roar till the earth shook, calling me every name he could lay tongue to. This was to frighten me, of course; and when he thought I was sufficiently impressed, he'd back away softly and try to make a sneak for the creek. Sometimes I'd let him get almost there—only a couple of hundred yards away it was—when out I'd pop and back he'd come, lumbering along like the old landslide he was. After I'd done this a few times, and he'd figured it out, he changed his tactics. Grasped the time element, you see. Without a word of warning, away he'd go, tearing for the water like mad, scheming to get there and back before I ran away. Finally, after cursing me most horribly, he raised the siege and deliberately stalked off to the water hole.

"That was the only time he penned me—three days of it—but after that the hippodrome never stopped. Round, and round, and round, like a six days' go-as-I-please, for he never pleased. My clothes went to rags and tatters, but I never stopped to mend, till at last I ran naked as a son of earth, with nothing but the old hand-axe in one hand and a cobble in the other. In fact, I never stopped, save for peeps of sleep in the crannies and ledges of the cliffs. As for the bull, he got perceptibly thinner and thinner—must have lost several tons at least—and as nervous as a schoolmarm on the wrong side of matrimony. When I'd come up with him and yell, or lam him with a rock at long range, he'd jump like a skittish colt and tremble all over. Then he'd pull out on the run, tail and trunk waving stiff, head over one shoulder and wicked eyes blazing, and the way he'd swear at me was something dreadful. A most immoral beast he was, a murderer, and a blasphemer.

"But toward the end he quit all this, and fell to whimpering and crying like a baby. His spirit broke and he became a quivering jelly-mountain of misery. He'd get attacks of palpitation of the heart, and stagger around like a drunken man, and fall down and bark his shins. And then he'd cry. But always on the run. O man, the gods themselves would have wept with him, and you yourself or any other

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man. It was pitiful, and there was so much of it, but I only hardened my heart and hit up the pace. At last I wore him clean out, and he lay down, broken-winded, broken-hearted, hungry, and thirsty. When I found he wouldn't budge, I ham-strung him, and spent the better part of the day wading into him with the hand-axe, he a-sniffing and sobbing till I worked in far enough to shut him off. Thirty feet long he was, and twenty high, and a man could sling a hammock between his tusks and sleep comfortably. Barring the fact that I had run most of the juices out of him, he was fair eating, and his four feet, alone, roasted whole, would have lasted a man a twelvemonth. I spent the winter."

"And where is this valley?" I asked.

He waved his hand in the direction of the northeast, and said: "Your tobacco is very good. I carry a fair share of it in my pouch, but I shall carry the recollection of it until I die. In token of my appreciation, and in return for the moccasins on your own feet, I will present to you these *muclucs*. They commemorate Klooch and the seven blind little beggars. They are also souvenirs of an unparalleled event in history, namely, the destruction of the oldest breed of animal on earth, and the youngest. And their chief virtue lies in that they will never wear out."

Having effected the exchange, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, gripped my hand good night, and wandered off through the snow.

Concerning this tale, for which I have already disclaimed responsibility, I would recommend those of little faith to make a visit to the Smithsonian Institute. If they bring the requisite credentials and do not come in vacation time, they will undoubtedly gain an audience with Professor Dolvidson. The *muclucs* are in his possession, and he will verify, not the manner in which they were obtained, but the material of which they are composed. When he states that they are made from the skin of the mammoth, the scientific world accepts his verdict. What more would you have?

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*Clavering was on the run. He had dodged and bribed and stowed away, and he made it all the way to the Rim Worlds, on the outermost edge of the Galaxy. Man could not go further, which was torture to Clavering, because he was...*

# The Man Who Could Not Stop

## *by A. Bertram Chandler*

THEY AREN'T PARTICULAR ABOUT settlers in the Rim Worlds.

They can't afford to be. The night sky, at those seasons of the year when the sun is in conjunction with the great lens of the Galaxy, is frightening, even to those who were born and reared there, on the planets of the last, the ultimate frontier. It is the emptiness of the firmament that is so shocking, the emptiness made even worse by the dim, incredibly distant nebulosities that are other galaxies, that are island universes. Many a man has come to Thule, or Faraway, or Ultimo to carve out a new career and, after a stay of only a few months, has taken ship for some planet in towards the Galactic center, for some world where at night the sky is ablaze with stars, with the beckoning, comradely lights of far-flung colonies and kingdoms.

There is a continual drain of population from the Rim Worlds. Their imports are, literally, everything, and their exports are young men and women. Without Federation aid the colonies would have to be abandoned; but they are look-out posts on the frontier of the endless dark, and as such must be maintained.

They are also the worlds from which a man on the run can run no further.

Clavering was on the run, and he ran to Faraway. Clavering was wanted, originally, on Earth, but during his flight he had contrived to make himself interesting to the police forces of at least a dozen other planets. His original crime had been robbery with violence—and what made it worse, from the viewpoint of the Terran authorities, was that the victims of the crime had been non-human, and highly important non-humans at that. It was unthinkable, of course, that the Shaara Empire should go to war with the Fed-



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eration over the theft of the imperial regalia; even so, the High Queen cut short her visit to Washington and her farewell to Terran dignitaries was rather less than warm.

Clavering was on the run, and he bribed and hid and forged and stowed away, and somehow he stayed free and somehow kept moving. Plastic surgeons on four planets helped him with changes of identity. Somewhere along the line he added murder to his crimes—although it was really self defense; Clavering's spirit was restless, driving, self-torturing . . . but it was not wholly evil. There were other thefts — mainly of money. The larger items of the High Queen's regalia, even when broken up, were not easy to dispose of.

He had known for a long time, as do all who live on the wrong side of the Law, that there is no extradition from the Rim Worlds. It was on Van Diemen's Planet that he made his decision. A friendly police officer had warned him, for a consideration, that Terran agents would be arriving on the next in-bound liner, and the tramp freighter *Jolly Swagman,* owned by the Faraway Line and homeward bound, was almost ready to blast off from Port Tasman. Her captain was ready and willing to supplement his salary by arranging a passage at very short notice.

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It is a long run from Van Diemen's Planet to Faraway, all of twelve weeks, subjective time, and the queer, dimension warping fields of the Drive have time to build up so that the last half of the voyage is made through an utterly unreal continuum. Through the wide viewports are seen not the usual swirls of light, but star upon star, stretching, apparently, to infinity. Some captains making the run to the Rim warn their passengers what to expect when the Interstellar Drive is shut off. Others don't—and the Captain of *Jolly Swagman* was one of their number.

It was a shock like a physical blow—that sudden emptiness where, a split second before, all the hosts of heaven had blazed. The one lonely sun, and beyond it the few dim nebulosities, made it worse than complete emptiness would have been.

Clavering looked, and gulped, and decided that he would not like Faraway.

He did not revise his opinion when, two days later, he faced the Immigration officials at Port Remote. He had looked at the mirror in his cabin before going down to the ship's Lounge, had decided that the very ordinary looking Mr. Jones—face-shaped face, hair-colored hair, eye-colored eyes—bore no resemblance to the rather striking James Clavering who had run from Earth. He had checked his papers. They were good papers, as they should have been. He had certainly paid enough for them.

The senior Immigration inspector sat at one of the Lounge tables, the Purser beside him. He looked up as Clavering approached, bleak, grey eyes belying the almost infantile chubbiness of his rosy face.

"This is Mr. Jones," said the Purser.

The Inspector ignored him.

"Your name," he said, "is Clavering. You are wanted for robbery with violence on Earth, murder on Carribea, forgery on Nova Caledon . . ."

"My name," said Clavering, "is Jones. I have papers . . ."

"Of course you have. Who did you get 'em from, by the way? Lazarus on Nova Caledon, or Macdonald on Van Diemen's Planet?"

"My name," repeated Clavering, "is Jones."

"Mr. Jones," said the Inspector, "I'm sure you know that there's no extradition here. But—and bear this in mind—we can, in extreme cases, deport. Furthermore, we have an efficient police force and our prisons are not the luxury hotels that they are elsewhere in the Galaxy. As I suspect you will learn. I hope I'm wrong—I rarely am."

The bleak eyes moved on.

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After his passport had been stamped Clavering said a few farewells aboard the ship, then took a taxi from the spaceport to Faraway City. The city was what he had expected it to be, a slightly overgrown town. Dwarfing it were the snow capped mountains of the Last Range—named, as Clavering knew from his reading in the ship's library, after Commodore Last who had made the initial landing on Faraway.

He booked in at the hotel—Rimrock House—that had been recommended to him by the Purser. After his baggage had been brought up he locked the door and made sure that what remained of the Shaara jewels was safe. Then he sat on the bed to think things over.

He had had plenty of time for reading on the voyage from Port Tasman. He had discovered that the laws of the Rim Worlds protected criminals from the consequences of crimes committed elsewhere in the Galaxy but, at the same time, were designed to rob them of the proceeds of such crimes. For example, he could take the Shaara High Queen's diamond encrusted belt to any of the city jewellers without fear of arrest. *But*—the jeweller could take possession of it, turn it in and share in any reward money.

"They're a bunch of crooks," Clavering growled.

There must, he thought, be fences on Faraway. The problem was how to find them. Another possible problem was that the news might already have spread that Clavering, the man who stole the Shaara imperial regalia, was on Faraway. In which case Clavering could expect a visit from the local underworld.

Clavering inspected the contents of his wallet. His Federation currency was legal tender, but he had enough only for a week's board and lodging. He looked at his watch, which he had adjusted to local time and length of day. It was mid-afternoon. By evening, he hoped, he would be well on his way to finding his feet in this new world.

The jewels he stowed in a large briefcase, which he chained and locked to his wrist. He had noticed, on the way in from the spaceport, that the building next door to the hotel was the First National Bank of Faraway, and his first move was to deposit the briefcase in the bank's strong room.

He sauntered away from the bank, towards the center of the city. There were, he noted approvingly, plenty of policemen, very smart and efficient looking in their neat uniforms of white shirt and blue kilt. He had already decided what crime he would commit; he did not think that shop-lifting would be a suffi-

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ciently heinous offense to merit deportation rather than jail. He hoped that the jails would not be as bad as the Immigration inspector had implied.

He walked into a large store, took the escalator to the Men's Clothing department, sauntered casually along the aisles until he saw a display—of Altairan crystal silk belts—that took his fancy. He picked up one of the belts, admired the way that it clung to his hands in an almost sentient manner. With elaborate unconcern he rolled it up, slipped it into the inside pocket of his jacket. He walked slowly towards the *Down* escalator.

Five yards before he got to it, he felt a firm hand on his elbow . . .

The Magistrate before whom Clavering appeared was suitably censorious, with reference to abuse of the open-handed hospitality of Faraway. He regretted that the penalty of deportation did not apply to the crime of which Clavering had been found guilty. He passed sentence.

"Six months," he said happily. "Six months hard labor."

"But, Your Worship," said Clavering. "This is my first offense."

"On this world, perhaps," replied the Magistrate. Then, to the policemen, "Take him away."

They took him away.

Clavering sat on his cot in the bare cell.

*I'll have to make the best of it,* he thought. *Six months is longer than I need to find the name of a reliable fence — but I should be able to find out plenty more. When I leave here I'll have all my contacts lined up. I'll know just how far I can go without getting deported . . .*

He stood up as the small shutter at the top of the door slammed open, and took the tray of food that was passed in to him. He looked at the soggy bread, the beans swimming in water gravy, the jug of water. He carried the tray to the cot, sat down and began to eat.

He passed out the tray when the shutter opened again. He lay down on the cot. He slept.

He slept surprisingly well. He was ready for his breakfast—although it was no more palatable than his supper had been—when it was passed in to him. When the door was unlocked, he joined a procession of shaven headed figures in glaringly striped uniforms. The guards, he noted, were well armed and looked as though they would stand no nonsense. He sighed. This was his third spell in jail, but his two previous experiences had been in establishments where the accent was on humanitarianism.

The hard labor was something about which he had read in his-

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torical novels but which he had thought no longer existed. It was stone breaking in the prison quarry—monotonous, back-breaking toil. He had hoped to be able to engage in conversations with fellow inmates during the outdoor activity, but the noise of hammers crashing on rock and the vigilance of the guards made this almost impossible.

The little, wizened man on his right did manage to ask, out of the corner of his mouth, "Are you a Rimmer?" and Clavering managed a hasty negative reply, and that was all.

The midday meal was eaten in the open—bread, beans and some unidentifiable meat that was all fat and gristle—but there were no opportunities for conversation. The afternoon passed in monotonous toil. Clavering was glad when he was locked in his cell for the night. . . .

*Six months. One hundred and eighty days. Do they work a seven day week? These damned guards must be recruited from a Trappist monastery, and they expect the rest of us to be Trappists, too . . . At this rate I shall be no wiser when I come out than when I went in. Well, tomorrow I'm going to talk whether they like it or not. After all, they can't shoot me . . .*

*Or can they?*

The following day his resolve was unshaken. He noticed that the little, wizened man was walking ahead of him in the procession.

"You!" he said, in ordinary conversational tones. "You! Shorty! Are you a Rimmer?"

The huge fist of the nearest guard drove, without warning, into his face. He staggered and fell. More intense than the pain was the feeling of consuming rage. He was on his feet again with a catlike agility, his own fists pounding into the bloated belly of the guard. Again he fell, this time under a rain of blows from behind. He was sufficiently in control of himself to roll into a ball, protecting his face with his arms from the heavy boots. It seemed far too long a time before he lost consciousness.

Gradually he became aware of a grey ceiling. He became aware, too, of pain—a dull ache over his legs and arms and most of his body, sharper pangs in his chest as he breathed. He turned his head so that the right side of his face lay on the pillow, groaning as the muscles of his neck protested. He could not, he discovered, see too well with his left eye. He saw a grey wall and the blurry figure of a man in convict stripes.

"Welcome back, Clavering," said the man.

"Who're you?" Clavering grunted with an effort.

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"I'm the Doctor. Doctor and inmate both. I'm too useful to them ever to be turned loose. Besides, I know too much. . . . Here, drink this!"

Clavering managed to struggle to a half-sitting position in the bed. He brought his good eye to bear on the doctor, saw an old man with scanty white hair, a deeply lined, grey face. With an effort he took the glass from him.

It was good brandy, even though it did cause the lacerations inside his mouth to sting painfully. After a few seconds Clavering felt stronger. He looked down at his body, from which the sheet had fallen, saw the taped ribs, the huge, blotchy bruises.

He said, without passion, "The bastards."

"You asked for it," said the doctor. "You asked for it, and you got it. I'd have thought that a man with your wide experience would have had more sense than to behave the way you did. I'd have thought that a man with your experience would have had more sense than to have landed in this hell hole in the first place."

"There were reasons," said Clavering.

"There always are," said the old man. "But go on."

"Can I trust you?" asked Clavering.

"Everybody trusts me—even the guards, even the Governor. They have to."

"Why don't they release you?"

"There's a limit to their trust. Besides . . . Do you know, I've no desire to get out into the world again. In many ways I have more freedom here than outside. Of course, I can't dress as I please—but, in compensation, I have no tailor's bills."

"All right," said Clavering abruptly. "I can trust you. But is this place bugged? It seems to be the one spot where a man can talk . . ."

"This isn't what you'd call a modern jail," said the Doctor. "As you've found out for yourself. None of *them* would ever have the intelligence to plant microphones."

As he spoke, he was scribbling on a pad. He held it so that Clavering could see the crabbed writing.

*Of course, it's bugged. But carry on talking. Use the pad for anything important.*

"I've a little money," said Clavering. "Or I had. It was in my wallet in my jacket pocket. I suppose it's in the Governor's safe now . . ."

He wrote: *I'm a stranger here—I thought jail would be the best place to make contacts . . .*

"It may still be there, if you're very lucky," said the Doctor.

*What I want,* wrote Clavering, *is the name of a good fence.*

He said, "I was hoping that you might be able to get the money

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out for me. On other worlds prisoners can arrange to buy stuff from the outside—this jail diet needs some help."

"On other worlds," said the Doctor, "they pamper their convicts."

He wrote, *I can hear them coming. I must flush these pages away.*

"After all," said Clavering to the retreating back, "we are human beings."

"Are we?" asked the Doctor. There was the sound of running water. "Are we?"

"A pig couldn't stomach the muck they feed us here," said Clavering.

A door opened. A tall man in plain black clothing walked in, escorted by two uniformed guards. He nodded curtly to the old Doctor, who replied with a nod of equal curtness. He stood by Clavering's bed, looking coldly down on him.

Clavering returned the stare. He wondered, as he had wondered when he had first met the Governor in his office, what an ex-spaceman was doing in such a position. In the other jails that he had known, the Governors had been either retired military men or high ranking police officers.

"No permanent damage, I trust? said the Governor to the Doctor.

"No thanks to your bullies. But he'll live."

"This," said the Governor to Clavering, "is not a Rest Home. On this world, on any of the Rim Worlds, we do not believe in pampering criminals. Criminals may come here, as you have done, to avoid the consequences of their crimes elsewhere in the Galaxy. If they make good citizens they are welcome. If they don't . . ."

"I'm beginning to regret having come here," said Clavering through swollen lips.

"No doubt you are. No doubt you have become used to being treated as a hospital patient rather than as a convict, as an interesting case to be studied by gentle and considerate psychiatrists. Here, on Faraway, we recognize only one school of psychology."

"Which is?" asked Clavering, feeling that it was expected of him.

"Pavlov's," replied the Governor.

"It is hard," said the Doctor, "to build up a conditioned reflex against wrongdoing in an adult human being."

"We can try," said the Governor.

At last, with no remission for good conduct, the six months were over. Clavering had his last interview with the Governor, handed in his prison uniform and received in exchange his civilian

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clothing, found that his watch, his wallet and his money were missing. His protests were laughed at.

He was met at the gate of the jail by a ground car with *Prisoners' Aid Society* emblazoned on its sides in huge white letters. He had no option but to accept the proferred help. He rode back to Faraway City seated beside the driver, a huge man who, to judge by his appearance, was an ex-policeman. Poverty, thought Clavering, makes strange bedfellows.

On the outskirts of the city the truck pulled up alongside a drab, barracks-like building which obviously—its occupants being lavish in their use of neon signs—was the headquarters of the Society. The driver of the car took Clavering into the office where a repellently fat woman took down his particulars. He was then told that the Society would find him work and would house and feed him—his board and lodging being deducted by his employer from his weekly pay—until such time as he could fend for himself. A job, it appeared, was already waiting for him—one of the firms of importers had a vacancy for a junior clerk. He was to start the following morning.

Clavering thanked the woman with more politeness than sincerity, was led by a skinny girl to a sparsely furnished cubicle. The girl turned to leave.

"Wait!" said Clavering. "Please . . ."

The girl said sullenly, "Old blubber-guts will throw a fit if I'm not back in the office in two seconds flat."

"Let her," said Clavering. "What's the set-up here?"

"You make your own bed and sweep your own floor," said the girl. "You eat at ought seven thirty and eighteen hundred hours. On Saturdays and Sundays the hostel gives you a noon meal too. It ain't any good."

"What I meant was—what are the chances of getting out of here?"

She laughed. "None. By the time the cost of your board and lodging have been taken out of your pay you'll have enough left for a couple of shots and a deck of smokes. And with your record you won't get a job anywhere except through the Society."

"This," said Clavering, "is worse than jails I've been in on more civilized planets."

"Nobody," she pointed out, "asked you to come here."

She left him. Clavering went to the blotchy mirror, looked at himself. His suit was still a fair fit, although it tended to be a little tight across the chest and shoulders, more than a little slack across the belly. Clavering shrugged. It didn't much matter. He would soon have money enough—even though the fence in

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Faraway City would be no more honest than fences are anywhere —to buy a new suit, to set himself up in some sort of business.

In some sort of business? He asked himself with a certain amazement. What's come over me? Was Pavlov right after all? But I don't want to risk another spell in that jail. . . .

He left the hostel.

He had no money, so he had to walk into the city, feeling thankful that it was no more than an overgrown town. He went first to Rimrock House, and found that his baggage had been stored and that there were storage charges to pay. He said that he would pick it up later.

He went into the First National Bank. The official in charge of safe deposits remembered Mr. Jones. Even so, there were certain formalities to be observed—finger print and retinal patterns to check, five months' storage charges to pay . . . He was sorry, but rules were made for the protection of customers as well as for the protection of the bank and, furthermore, were not made to be broken . . .

Clavering left the bank. It was past noon, and he had had nothing to eat since his prison breakfast. He hadn't had a drink for six months, and had had nothing to smoke in that period but the vile, acrid prison tobacco.

He considered walking to the address that the Doctor had given him, but it was on the other side of the city and there was, too, the possibility that the fence would refuse to advance him the money for his immediate requirements. Anyhow, Clavering had his pride, and he didn't like fences, and hated to place himself under any obligation to one.

It was lucky, thought Clavering, that he had never become a specialist. He could crack a safe or forge a signature or pick a pocket—not, of course, with the best practitioners of these various arts but with, he prided himself, the second best. The present situation called for pocket picking. He began to look around him for a likely mark.

A prosperous-looking fat man was window shopping nearby. Clavering ran a trained eye over his clothing. The shirt was Altairan crystal silk, and Altairan crystal silk is not among the cheaper textiles. The jacket was one of the finer, more expensive tweeds from Nova Caledon, and the kilt and stockings obviously came from Scotland itself. (Clavering wondered if the fat man had any right to wear the Clan Graeme tartan.) The shoes had that sheen peculiar to leather made from the hides of the great fish lizards of the Markara swamps. The bulge under the jacket was almost certainly a well-filled wallet.

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Clavering waited until the fat man was staring into the window of a delicatessen, well stocked with gastronomical temptation from a score of worlds, before making his approach. He sauntered up to him and said, "Pardon me, have you the time? My watch is being repaired . . ."

"Twelve after thirteen," replied the other, affably enough.

"Quite a fine display, isn't it?" said Clavering, nodding towards the window. "Of course some of these things don't travel too well. The only way to eat witchety grubs, for example, is to pick them straight from the hot ashes on to which they've been dropped alive and squirming . . ."

"I've never been to Earth," said the fat man. "Next year, perhaps. But I always say that I can have a cruise of the Galaxy whenever I feel like it, in my own kitchen."

"What's that stuff there?" asked Clavering. "That opalescent jelly in the fancy jar?"

"It comes from Windhover. Have you ever been there?"

"No."

"Neither have I—but, thanks to my hobby, I know plenty about it. At certain seasons of the year—and seasons there are rather complicated, as they're bound to be in a binary system—the big sea spiders come ashore and build nests among the rocks with secretions from their bodies . . ."

When he had heard enough to make him resolve that no foodstuff from Windhover would ever find its way on to his table, Clavering asked the time again. He excused himself, saying that he had an appointment. He walked away—not too fast and not too slow, putting several corners between himself and the fat man. He arrived eventually in a small park. He found a vacant seat—the day was fine and warm and most of the office workers there were eating their lunches on the grass.

He pulled his prize, the precious wallet, out of his pocket.

It wasn't a wallet.

It was a cigar case.

Anyhow, thought Clavering, he would have a quiet smoke before doing anything further. He took one of the fat cigars, held it appreciatively under his nose, then lit it with the lighter that was part of the case.

It tasted . . . odd.

It wasn't unpleasant, it was, most definitely, *good*. Its oddness was probably the result of having his palate ruined by the chopped straw and horse droppings that went by the name of tobacco in the Central Jail.

Horse droppings?

Insult to horse—man's best friend.

Without horses—what to bet on?

Dogs?

Hell with dogs!

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Hate dogs.

One there, taking fat woman for walk.

Coming this way.

Hell wif'm.

Going to kick me.

Kick'm first.

Madam, I refuse to be kicked by your mangy cur. I have refused to be kicked by mangy curs on every civilized planet of Galaxy. Matter of principle, tha's wha'. Man of principle, tha' me.

'Scuse . . . Not well . . . Must be fish or something . . .

It was not the fish, fish being a luxury of which Clavering had not partaken for months. It was the cigar. It was a very expensive cigar—being rolled from a mixture of Terran tobacco and the Lyran *kaleph* weed. The fumes from their joint burning produce an effect very like that of alcohol, and when taken on an empty stomach and after half a year of abstinence from strong drink, intoxication is the inevitable result.

The Magistrate before whom Clavering appeared on his drunk and disorderly charge greeted him as an old enemy. He repeated his remarks about the abuse of Rim World hospitality. He even went so far as to repeat the sentence. The sentence might have been less had it not been discovered that the cigar case did not bear Clavering's name.

He was in a bitter mood when he was taken to the Central Jail.

He stood sullenly before the Governor.

"I thought," said that official, "that you would be a repeater, but I did not expect you back so soon."

"I did not expect to be back at all."

"But you are," said the Governor tiredly. "However, I have decided to be lenient. You are a man of intelligence, and that intelligence is wasted on the rock pile. We have, strange though it may seem, some machinery in this establishment, and it has to be maintained . . ."

"And will the better job bring better food?" asked Clavering bluntly.

"The food will be the same. Really it should be inferior, as you will be expending far less physical energy."

"Sir," said Clavering earnestly, "may I ask you a question?"

"You may."

"Then tell me—just what crime must one commit to get oneself deported from the Rim Worlds?"

"Not murder," replied the Governor, smiling bleakly. "We hang people for that. We're very old fashioned here, as you may have noticed. As a matter of fact three convictions running, for any crime or crimes, is usually sufficient. That's the Law."

"Thank you," said Clavering.

His second sentence dragged as

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slowly as had his first one had.

This time he managed to avoid any serious physical maltreatment and his only visit to the hospital was when he was suffering from a slightly infected hand. Guards were present while it was being dressed and he was unable to tell his story to the old Doctor.

The time dragged—yet, in spite of himself, he found himself developing a very real interest in machinery. When at last the day came for him to leave the prison he had to fight down the feeling that he should say goodbye to his old, well polished, smoothly working charges.

The same ground car took him to Faraway City, the same fat woman admitted him to the Prisoners' Aid Society Hostel. He found, as before, that there was a job waiting for him, but this time it was in one of the smaller garages in the city.

Clavering decided not to rush things this time. He did not go near either the hotel or the bank on his first day of freedom, but stayed in the hostel, reading. The following morning he reported for work in the garage and spent the forenoon cleaning and polishing one ground car and two helicopters. The boss advanced him enough money for his lunch, which he bought at a snack bar close to the garage. In the afternoon he was allowed, under supervision, to overhaul an engine.

He had his evening meal at the hostel. It was not much of an improvement over the prison food. When it had settled, he decided to walk out to the address that he had been given during his first spell in jail.

It was a clear night, and it was the first time that Clavering had seen the night sky for a year. It was autumn in Faraway's northern hemisphere, and the Galactic lens was almost in conjunction with the sun. As Clavering walked slowly out along the road with its sparse lining of houses he looked upwards. The emptiness that he saw was as shocking as it had been the first time that he had seen it from *Jolly Swagman's* observation lounge. He understood now the stories he had heard to the effect that everybody who could afford to leave Faraway finished up in the Cluster Planets.

He reached, at last, the house where he had been told that he would find the fence. He hesitated for a while at the gate to the long drive, feeling an unwonted nervousness. What, he wondered, would go wrong this time? And the worst of it was that there was no place to run if things did go wrong. He had been running all his life and had come at the last to the very edge of the dark, the frontier of utter negation.

He shrugged.

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These crazy Rim Worlds, he told himself, did things to you.

He pressed the button set in one of the posts of the wrought iron gate. There was a faint whirring sound that told him he was being scanned. From a hidden speaker came a metallic voice.

"Who are you? What do you want?"

"I am John Clavering. I wish to speak with your master, with Mr. Konradis."

"What is your business?"

"I will tell that to Mr. Konradis."

"I repeat: What is your business?"

"Damn nosy robot. . . . My business is private."

A new voice broke in, a human voice.

"What do you want?"

"Are you Mr. Konradis?"

"Yes."

"Then my business concerns the Shaara imperial regalia."

There was a sharp intake of breath, distinctly audible to Clavering. There was a click as the lock of the gate was released. It swung silently open.

Clavering walked slowly up the drive, his boots crunching on the yellow gravel. He looked at the house that was more of a fortress than a dwelling place. The front door opened at his approach. Clavering stepped into a hall—bare, unfurnished, ablaze with harsh, blue-white light.

"Take the door to your right," ordered a voice.

Clavering did so. He found himself in a room that was as large as the one that he had just left but, if anything, over-furnished, over-decorated. Behind a huge, polished desk sat a little man, the lamp light reflected gleamingly from his bald skull.

He said, "Sit, Mr. Clavering."

Clavering sat.

He said, "I suppose you have come to see if I wish to take the Shaara jewels off your hands."

Clavering said yes.

"I will be honest with you, Mr. Clavering. I will let you have five per cent of the value of the jewels. After all, if it had not been for you I should never have been able to engage in one of the more profitable deals in my career."

"Five per cent! I promise you I will drop them in the sea before I will sell them for five per cent."

"Mr. Clavering, almost six months ago I was approached by the Queen-Captain of a Shaara vessel, and, much as I dislike dealing with non-humans, the arthropoda especially, I let her persuade me to use what little influence I have to recover the regalia from the bank."

He paused. He put both hands into the drawer under the desk top. His right hand came up holding a bundle of banknotes, his left hand grasping a deadly little Minetti automatic. He said, "Don't

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get ideas, Mr. Clavering. I am left handed. Catch!"

Clavering caught the money. He counted it. It would be enough to buy him a new suit and perhaps a used ground car or helicopter. It would not be enough to buy passage to another planet, even to one of the other Rim Worlds.

He said, "The Shaara Captain wasn't very generous."

"She gave me all the Federation money she had in her ship's safe," said Konradis.

"So there is more to come," said Clavering.

"Maybe. But there is no more for you."

Clavering choked down his rage. He put the money in an inside pocket. He got to his feet, walked slowly to the door. The muzzle of the little automatic in Konradis' hand swung to follow him as he walked. Clavering ignored it. His photographic memory was hard at work, noting and filing details of windows and their fastenings, doors and their locks. He had met men of the receiver's type before and knew that they relied far more heavily upon robot guards than upon fallible humans.

He knew, as Konradis obviously didn't, that robots can be fallible too.

He left the house, left the grounds, walked slowly back to the city.

Back in the hostel Clavering went to his cubicle, lay on the bed and marshalled facts.

(a) What remained of the Shaara regalia when he had come to Faraway was by this time once again in the possession of the High Queen.

(b) Twenty times Cr. 1,000, which was what Konradis had given him, was Cr. 20,000. The fence must have made at least five times that amount on the deal, to judge by the reward that had been advertised after the theft had taken place.

(c) A passage to, say, Van Diemen's Planet would cost at least Cr. 2,500.

(d) A man like Konradis almost always kept a large sum of ready money in the house, usually in a bedroom safe.

(e) The doorkeeping robot was a Farrar-Blenkinsop, model Mark IV. Clavering knew things about the Mark IV, expertly extracted from a drunken Farrar-Blenkinsop technician.

(f) Konradis undoubtedly had friends on the police force, therefore his mouth must be shut for at least six hours after the burglary. There was a little somno gun in Clavering's baggage which would take care of that angle.

(g) Clavering's baggage was, presumably, still in the Rimrock House storage rooms—but the Cr. 1,000 he had received from Konradis would be more than

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enough to cover the charges.

(h) Clavering's papers, made out in the name of Jones, were still in his baggage. A few Cr. 10 bills, wisely used, would get them stamped in the right places by the right people.

(i) The Interstellar Transport Commission's *Delta Serpens* was standing at Port Remote, scheduled to blast off for Mitylene at 2400 hours the following night. . . .

"So," said Clavering to himself, "if I catch her I run the slight risk of winding up in a Terran jail. It's only a slight risk—and, after all, Terran jails are luxury hotels compared with the one here. In any case, the Shaara High Queen's got her tomfoolery back by now so the heat must be off.

"If I stay here, I shall almost certainly wind up in jail again. Then I shall be deported. And that way it is *certain* that the police, local as well as Federal, will be waiting for me on whatever planet I'm sent to.

"It's worth the risk."

He undressed, got into bed. Within seconds he was sleeping like a happy child.

The following morning he rang the garage, said that he was ill and would not be coming in to work. He went straight to the Rimrock House, where he had to wait for his baggage to be brought up from the storerooms. He took a taxi back to the hostel, took his baggage up to his room, locked the door and unpacked. He checked the little somno gun, testing it on one of the tiny flying lizards that were common pests on Faraway. It worked. He found the sheet of specially treated paper. Lacking infra-red scanning equipment he couldn't test that, but he had no reason to doubt that it would work. He repacked his baggage, putting all his papers in his brief case, the somno gun in the side pocket of his kilt, the sheet of paper in the inside breast pocket of his jacket.

He went back to the job at the garage for what was left of the forenoon and all the afternoon. During the lunch break—he was left in charge while the other employees went out for their meal—he was able to take a good wax impression of the key to the main door. He decided which car he would use—a big, old-fashioned Ferranti monowheel.

He finished his day's work and returned to the hostel. Back in his cubicle he found signs that his baggage had been tampered with. The maid? The superintendent? One of the other ex-convict guests? It didn't matter. He was relieved to find that his tools and key blanks had not been stolen; replacements could be purchased easily in any hardware store, but all the shops were now shut until the following morning.

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After dinner downstairs, he returned to his room. Behind the locked door he worked on one of his blanks, whistling to cover the rasping of his file.

When he was finished, he put the key and one of the files in his kilt pocket, and his papers into his briefcase. Into a small suitcase he packed bare necessities—the *Delta* class liners, he knew, ran to a small ship's shop where he would be able to purchase anything further required during the voyage.

Carrying the two cases he went downstairs. He met only the skinny maid. She looked at him curiously.

He said, "I should be able to get a fair price for these. I was talking to one of our customers in the garage today and he said that he wanted to buy some good, secondhand baggage. I'm taking them out to him."

She said, not really interested, that she hoped he got a good price.

He walked slowly into the city, to the office of the Interstellar Transport Commission's agents. It was still open, and would remain open until *Delta Serpens* had blasted off.

To the bored young man behind the counter Clavering said, "Are there any berths left aboard the Earth ship?"

"Yes, sir. Not the best—they're all taken. There's a cabin on F Level if you don't mind the heat and the noise."

"I'll take it."

"To Mitylene, or beyond?"

"What's the fare to Mitylene?"

"Two thousand."

"I haven't that much with me right now," said Clavering. "I have to collect the balance from a friend this evening."

"Two thousand," said the clerk.

"It's rather important that I catch the ship," said Clavering. "I'm willing to make it worth your while. Suppose I make a deposit of Cr. 500 on my ticket . . . Suppose I leave my papers with you, and this suitcase . . . You could get the papers fixed up for me, and I meet you at the spaceport at, say, 2330 hours. You give me my ticket, and I give you the balance of Cr. 2,500 . . ."

This was the sort of arithmetic that the clerk understood. He looked at the papers, riffled through them, and nodded.

"Yes, Mr. Jones," he said. "It can be arranged. I'm sure that it can be arranged."

Clavering paid the initial five hundred credits, walked briskly out of the office. He looked up and down the street, his lip lifting in a sneer. A hick town on a hick planet. He looked up at the black, empty sky, thought how good it would be when he saw the great, blazing lens of the Galaxy fill *Delta Serpens'* viewpoints as she swung round to the

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course that would take her to Mitylene and to the thriving, bustling worlds of the Inner Systems.

Clavering looked at his watch. He had time to kill. He went into a Newsreel Theatre, watched events that were history rather than news. When he found himself watching, for a second time, the coronation of King James XIV of Waverly he left.

He strolled casually from the theatre to the garage. There were only a few passers-by, and there were no policemen in sight.

His new key was a good fit, opening the big doors with no delay. The big Ferranti was where he had left it, near the door. The gyroscope reached maximum revolutions inside three minutes and Clavering retracted the parking props, rolled slowly out into the street. He left the car briefly while he shut and locked the garage doors.

He made the run to Konradis' house without incident. He stopped the car just short of the ornamental gates and got out, leaving the gyroscope running. He started as a sudden, raucous sound broke the silence. So Konradis kept fowls, and one of his roosters had an odd sense of time . . . He remembered the night that he had got Fredericks, the Farrar-Blenkinsop roboticist, drunk.

"Thing to 'member," Fredericks had said, "is this. All our robots have brains. But not human brains. Not anything like. Take Mark IV. Same I.Q. as domestic fowl . . . Funny thing—bunch of us talking 'bout it, 'membered 'bout hypnotizin' chickens. Fantastic. Works on Mark IV too . . ."

"And how do you hypnotize a chicken?" Clavering had asked.

"Easy. Draw line on floor. Hold her beak down to it."

"But the Mark IV hasn't got a beak . . ."

"Special paper, hold up to scanner. Shows, in infra-red, very straight, very dark line . . ."

So Clavering had carried out his own experiments, but had been careful never to carry out a robbery by making use of the doorkeeping robot's weakness. He had decided to keep the knowledge in reserve until such time as its use would be justified.

This was the time.

He saw, on the nearer gatepost, the dim glow of the button. He took the specially prepared paper out of his pocket, unfolded it. He stood before the gatepost, the paper held over his face. With his right forefinger he found the button, pressed it. He heard the whirring noise as the scanner went into action.

"Who are you?" asked the metallic voice, then stopped.

"You know me," said Clavering.

"Yes."

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"I am a friend."

"Yes."

"Let me in."

"Yes."

The lock clicked, the gate swung open. Clavering got back into the car—he would need it both as a means of transportation and as a temporary prison for Konradis—and drove up the drive. At his approach the front door of the house opened. He transferred the somno gun to the side pocket of his jacket. He got out of the car, walked to the door, into the house.

The muzzle of the gun was trained on the door to Konradis' study. As it opened. Clavering fired. He felt rather than heard the whine of the thing. He saw Konradis stagger inside the doorway, the automatic dropping from his hand. He saw Konradis fall, not unconscious, only partially paralyzed.

Clavering dragged him into the study, propped him up in one of the chairs.

"I could have used full power," said the thief, "but I didn't. You're no use to me fast asleep. I want you to talk."

"I . . ." the words came with painful slowness . . . "refuse."

"Where is your safe?"

Konradis was silent.

"The trouble with somno guns," remarked Clavering, "is that the victim is quite insensitive to pain, so more extreme measures are required than would be the case otherwise." He unbuckled Konradis' right shoe, pulled it off. He pulled off the stocking. "You will be able to feel nothing, but you will be able to watch me build a fire in that ornamental but doubtless quite efficient fireplace of yours . . . You have kindling and coals all ready—thoughtful of you. You will, as I have said, feel nothing—but it will be a rather trying experience for you to watch your foot being slowly consumed by the flames . . ."

"You . . . daren't . . ." said Konradis.

"Daren't I?" asked Clavering, lighting the fire.

"Bedroom," said Konradis when his foot was an inch from the fire. "Behind . . . picture . . ."

"And the combination? Hurry, now—I might get tired and drop this foot."

Konradis told him. Konradis told him too, reluctantly, of the concealed switch that would start the pump to evacuate the anaesthesic gas from the safe — this was after Clavering had placed a short stub of ornamental candle from the dining room in a box of highly inflammable material, telling Konradis that unless he was down from the bedroom in a reasonably short time he, Konradis, would suffer at least very severe burns before the fire extinguishing equipment came into action.

Clavering found the bedroom,

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and wished that he could have stolen its furniture and decorations—he had a sound, professional knowledge of antiques. He found the safe behind a genuine Picasso. He found the switch for the pump, concealed in the right nipple of a platinum nude by Kirschwasser. He waited until the whining of the little machine had stopped before he opened the safe.

There was currency—good, honest, Federation currency — ample for all his needs. Clavering stuffed it into a silken pillowslip from the bed. He went downstairs, blew out the candle under Konradis' chair.

"Now," he said, "you're coming with me."

"Why?"

"Because I say so. The effects of a somno gun last only so long, and as soon as they wear off you'll be giving the alarm. If I tie you up and leave you here you might wriggle free. In the boot of the car you'll be quite safe—all that I have to do is give you an occasional jolt. Actually, I'm being very considerate."

And, he thought, I can afford to be. I haven't lost the old touch. Tonight's operation went like clockwork.

It would have continued to go clockwork had it not been for the drunken driver roaring out of a side street at excessive speed. The boot of Clavering's car was burst open in the crash and the police officer who was on the spot before Clavering could collect his scattered senses regarded its contents with interest.

Clavering would have used his somno gun, but the little weapon had been broken in the accident. Clavering grabbed his briefcase, into which he had transferred the stolen money, and tried to run. He was brought down by a flying tackle from a meddling passer-by.

The Governor looked across his desk at Clavering almost with approval.

"You're back," he said.

"I'm back," admitted the prisoner. "How soon are they going to deport me? And where to?"

"Not so fast, Clavering. Not so fast. There is still the prison sentence to be served. We have some new machinery for you to look after—the pumps for our experimental hydroponics farm. We intend to make sure that you're well trained for your new life."

"Very decent of you, I'm sure."

"Oh, another point, Clavering —and your observance of it will save you a deal of trouble in the future. Just call me 'sir,' will you?"

"All right," said Clavering. "Sir."

He found his new work interesting. He found, too, that conditions were a lot easier, that the food was better and that the

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guards did not go to such extreme lengths to discourage conversation among the prisoners.

He soon realized that his workmates were men like himself, intelligent, but habitual criminals, incurable except by the personality-destroying brain surgery abhorred by all civilized worlds. He asked questions, but none of them knew to which planet or planets they were to be deported, or when. He discovered that a large number of convicts were being trained in other branches of engineering.

Then, at last, he was aroused one morning by the guard hammering at his door. He got up, began groping for his clothes. "Not those," barked the official. "Put these on!" He thrust a bundle through the open trap.

There was underwear, clean and new. There was a black coverall. There was a pair of highly polished black boots. On each sleeve of the coverall was a green fern leaf superimposed upon a golden gear wheel.

The new clothing was comfortable, and it fitted. Clavering left his cell when the door was unlocked, joined a procession of similarly garbed prisoners. At the prison gates, where the vans were waiting, he stopped to ask one of the guards, "What's wrong with the Governor? He usually says goodby to his departing guests."

"You'll be seeing Captain Christopher again," said the guard.

Clavering could see nothing from inside the van, but he was not surprised when the door opened to reveal the environs of the spaceport. He looked with interest at the other vans that were drawn up in an orderly line, at the black-clad men who were tumbling out of each one. It was cheaper, he supposed, to arrange a mass deportation every so often.

He stiffened with surprise as he turned to look at the ship. She was big, far bigger than any vessel that he had ever seen. She dwarfed the spaceport administration buildings, the cranes and gantries. Her tail fins were flying buttresses and she was a huge, improbable tower built of gleaming metal.

"We're travelling in style," said the man on Clavering's left. "They've sent an Alpha Class liner to pick us up."

"That's no Alpha Class liner," said Clavering. "It's at least twice the size!"

A voice was booming from loudspeakers: "Attention, all! Attention, all! Personnel will board the ship forthwith!"

The long lines of men shuffled forward, with alert guards in close attendance as they passed up the ramps into the airlocks. There was an elderly man, in Purser's uniform, on duty at the head of the ramp by which Clavering boarded. He was tick-

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ing off names on a sheet.

"Clavering, John— Hydroponics."

The insignia on Clavering's sleeves, the work that he had been doing during his last prison sentence, added up to make sense.

"Making us work our passages?" he remarked.

The Purser ignored him.

"Cowden, Peter— Air Circulation. . . . Davis, David— Air Circulation. . . ."

"Hydroponics men, this way!" a voice was shouting.

Clavering, with the other men of his department, followed the Master at Arms through alleyways and up ladders, found himself with eleven more deportees in a sparsely furnished dormitory. The petty officer ignored all questions. The steel door shut with a decisive click.

The time dragged. The men talked in a desultory way. They were grateful when the wall speaker came to life and ordered them to their bunks for blast-off. They resented not being told what was happening—all their past experience of space travel had been as fare-paying passengers. They were relieved when the thunders died and the crushing weight was lifted from their chests. There was a little horseplay as they tumbled about the compartment in free fall.

"Attention!" barked the wall speaker. The bulkhead below it had come alive, had become a huge video screen. It depicted what was obviously the control room of a spaceship. It showed a tall man in black uniform who wore on his sleeves the four gold bands of captaincy.

"The Governor!" whispered somebody. "I thought he was just an ex-Captain!"

"And there's the old Quack with him!" muttered one of the other men.

"Men," said Captain Christopher quietly. "I do you the honor of calling you men, because it is a man's job that lies before you. A job so dangerous and uncertain that free men, who are willing to do it are hard to find. . . .

"History," he said after a pause, "repeats itself. Centuries ago there was another Christopher—although that was his given name—who knew that the Earth was round, and this in an age when the majority of seamen feared that if they sailed too far to the westward their ships, and themselves with them, would fall over the edge. This other Christopher, this Christopher Columbus, found that he could sail his ships only by impressing men from the jails.

"All of you who have come to the Rim Worlds have had your chances. All of you discovered, with your first experience of jail, that crime does not pay. And yet, although you knew that the pen-

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alty for habitual crime was deportation, you persisted in your ways. You are here, all of you, as the direct consequence of your own actions. The rest of us—myself, the officers and the petty officers—are here because we want to be. And I wish to make it clear that we do not intend to be thwarted in our purpose. I wish to make it clear that we, the professional spacemen, will be able to work the ship after a fashion should you be so unwise as to stage a mutiny. I wish to make it clear that under my command the rule is: He who does not work does not eat.

"I cannot say how long our voyage will take in terms of objective time—that is one of the things we have to find out. I cannot say, even, how long it will take measured by subjective time—but I think that we shall return before much more than a half century has passed.

"This I can say—there is no turning back. None of you know enough to handle a spaceship. You might, in time, learn enough so that you think you will be able to seize the ship and force my navigators and engineers to do your bidding. I will tell you only that the ship has defenses built-in with such an emergency in mind. In the extremely unlikely event of a successful mutiny there will be, I promise you, no return . . ."

Frantically, Clavering racked his mind for some legality in the name of which he could protest. There was none. By running to the Rim Worlds he had made himself subject to their laws, and one of those laws made deportation the punishment for the third conviction. He could not help but admire the cunning of the Federation—to make the Rim the haven for the criminal and to offer the criminal, on paper at least, the chance of reformation. It seemed that all who were potential space-crew material were given very little chance to reform.

With the others he watched as the control room scanner swung away from the Captain and his officers, watched as it showed that part of Space towards which the ship was heading. He heard the unique whine of a Mannschenn Drive starting up, knew that the screen would, in a few seconds, show only meaningless whorls of light.

And they would be better than the cold emptiness—the infinite nothingness interrupted only by the dim, distant nebulosity to which the ship was headed—the tiny, luminous cloud that was, perhaps, another Galaxy.

He had spent his life running, and he had run as far as he could, to the very edge of the night.

And he had not been able to stop.

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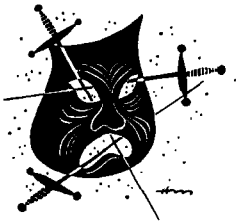

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